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Brenda L. Becker
Mary Gordon, Former Catholic

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THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR®

VOL. 14 AUGUST 1981 NO. 8

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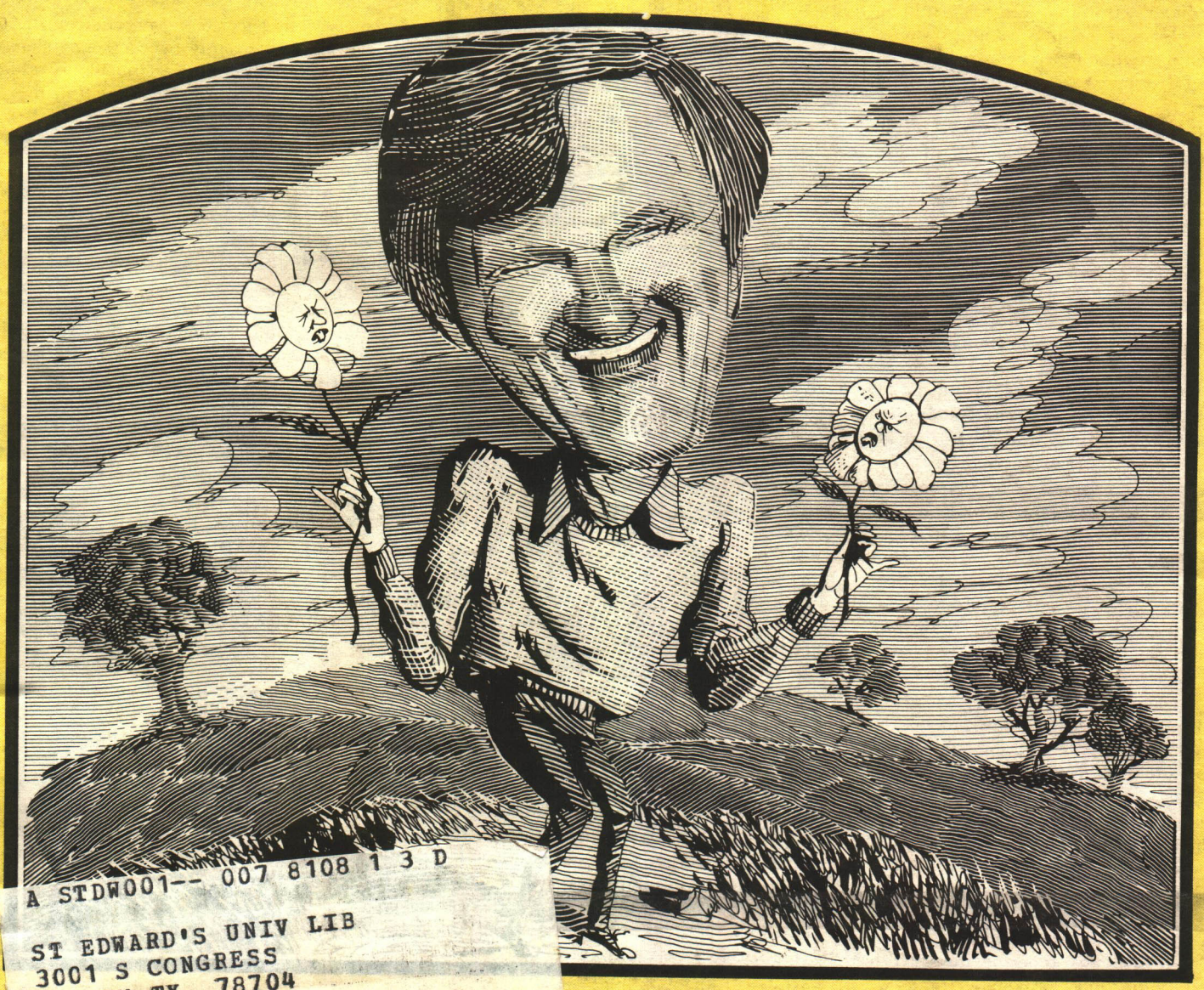

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A MONTHLY REVIEW
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THE CONTINUING CRISIS

• June 1 to July 1, and a rainy spring turned into a muggy, polluted summer. The children of the Republic found their movie in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, applauding most when a swashbuckling Arab was gunned down by a no-nonsense American. Applause among the plebs grew even louder upon news of the Israeli caper in Baghdad and the Ayatollah Beheshti's disappearance while on tirade in Teheran. Unfortunately, this latter example of the compensatory spirit governing the Iran-Iraq war was lost upon striking major league ballplayers and owners, who plunged the nation into a historic funk and sent fans in droves to already overcrowded zoos. An early victim of this sudden shift in spending habits was Max the Seal of Lincoln Park, Chicago, who died of a "stomach full of coins."

• Embattled fans resorted to the only weapon left to the powerless this season and commenced hunger strikes throughout the nation. Said one striker, the whimsical 215-pound Rob Graham of Muscatine, Iowa, "I've been meaning to lose some weight for a while now," and added that he'll only take vitamins, liquids, and "an occasional beer." Meanwhile, a hunger strike by five inmates at the Rushville, Indiana jail was disrupted when a deputy caught the inmates "nibbling." But at an upstate New York correctional facility for women, Jean Harris followed the thump of a different drummer. In a last shot at her departed lover, Mrs. Harris proclaimed that she has gained 15 pounds in recent weeks.

• In all other ways, however, Jean Harris's break with her past is complete; for one thing, the pugilistic pedagogue is now "enjoying things I never thought I'd enjoy . . . like having cold water in my sink. It's actually very refreshing." Such frivolity aside, the loss of Dr. Herman Tarnower remains insurmountable. Two pretenders to Tarnower's dubious throne squared off on NBC's "Tomorrow Coast to Coast," Nathan Pritikin charging that the Dr. Robert C. Atkins high cholesterol diet causes heart problems, bad breath, constipation, and fatigue, Atkins that the Pritkin regime can cause osteoporosis, a softening of bone structure. "The big mistake that Mr. Pritikin makes is that he tries to intimidate people against all the other diets. He was knocking the Beverly Hills diet the other day," Atkins charged. On June 29, Freddie Silverman was fired as NBC's head of programming.

• In the arts, women again dominated the news. In Berkeley, the illustrious Nancy Friedman threw a party to celebrate the publication of her latest classic, *Everything You Must Know About Tampons*. Wearing plastic tampon holders as earrings, Miss Friedman greeted guests in a garden featuring a four-foot "Tampoñata." PEN, an international writers' association that hands out annual writing awards to inmates in U.S. prisons, awarded a third prize in the "non-fictive" category to Emily Harris, former tutor to Patty Hearst, for "On the Open Road," an account of a revolutionary custody battle. Mrs. Harris's victory was assured when another contestant, James Earl Ray, failed to meet PEN's stringent deadline. While putting the finishing touches to his manuscript inside the library of the Brushy Mountain State Pentitentiary in Petros, Tennessee, Mr. Ray was stabbed 22 times by four inmates contemptuous of Ray's auctorial airs.

• In criminal matters overseas, a 23-year-old Dawuan, West Java woman was raped recently by a "fat monkey of still undetermined species," the West Java national news agency reported. The simian molester came across his victim asleep in the shade of a field, tore off her panties, "and calmly had intercourse with her." The woman's husband declined to press charges, noting, "After all, it was only a monkey." In East Boston, Illinois, James Silvestri was forced to pose for photographers clad in a towel after his three-story, 100-year-old house collapsed to the ground while he was taking a shower.

• The long arm of litigiousness continued to go unslapped as it poked and prodded through the plackets of the national fabric. On June 21, the Supreme Court upheld a male-only draft, and the California State Court of Appeals promptly dismissed the suit of a Redwood City High School student suspended for wearing a "F--- the Draft" button to class. Taking no chances, California Governor Jerry Brown agreed to perform jury duty in a criminal case revolving around the slashed tires of a Serbian Sacramento family, and as foreman produced a verdict within 35 minutes. In a carefully worded statement, Brown remarked, "It's an unusual experience that won't be forgotten for a long time." In Los Angeles, two men who froze human corpses in liquid nitrogen shortly after their demise under the assumption that future medical breakthroughs might be able to undo their deaths, were ordered to pay $1 million in damages to five claimants "who say their parents thawed." Some 50 members of a Tucson, Arizona religious group decided on a more proven method through which to extend their mortality when they announced that on June 29 they expected to be physically lifted to Heaven. "We're ready for the rapture," said devout construction laborer Bub Bowman. "My little one sort of wants a three-wheeler before it happens, but we're ready to go."

• Overseas again, in a gesture of friendship to visiting Vice President George Bush, French President Mitterand appointed four Communists to ministerial posts in his new government on June 23. Western analysts praised the move as one that confirmed recent French Communist setbacks. "After all," observed one departmental chairman of International Studies, "How often do you come across Communists willing to share power?" Not in Czechoslovakia, apparently, where single-slate candidates for that country's national assemblies and local councils won 99.96 percent of the vote in the June 7 general elections. In Bulgaria, moreover, Communists weren't even willing to share power among themselves when on June 16, Stanko Todorov was replaced by Grisha Filipov as prime minister. This shake-up is not expected to affect Bulgaria's foreign policy. Poland, in the meantime, remained under siege.

• On June 29, a rabid skunk attacked a dog in Bloomington, Indiana. Philip Agee failed to recover his passport and is being hailed as a tourist without a country. Wall Street executives were being terrorized by a men's room bandit who pounces as they sit defenselessly in their stalls poring over the latest stock reports. On June 30, after nagging at a Washington, D.C. ERA rally that interrupted afternoon naps in the vicinity of Lafayette Park, Alan Alda debuted on ABC's "Nightline," where his voluptuous excogitations repeatedly succumbed to the intellectual charms of George F. Will, patriot. And on June 18, Justice Potter Stewart announced that he would soon vacate the Woman's seat on the Supreme Court.

• In Plains, Georgia, Billy Carter was forced sell his legendary property at an auction attended by some 300 people including his destitute brother. The former President, eschewing the fratricidal zeitgeist let loose by the brothers of Ernest W. Lefever, defended his hard-pressed sibling: "Billy was singled out for special persecution because he was my brother." Jimmy then promptly applied for access to the PX at a nearby military base while Billy set off for Alabama, with Plains, Georgia in his rear-view mirror. And in Frankfort, Indiana, Miss Zerna A. Sharp, the inventor of Dick, Jane, Spot, and other American words, died at 91. Shortly before her death, the famed neologist looked back fondly on her decades of molding the embryonic grammatical structures of six-year-olds and observed, "There's nothing these book children do that a child couldn't remember having done themselves." —*WASP*

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EDITORIAL

BOUQUETS FOR THE ISRAELITES

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Why all the rending of garments over last month's Israeli air strike? The Iranians tried to bomb this very same Iraqi nuclear plant last September, and I noted no uproar. Why the anguished chorus over the Israeli attack? Is it because the Israelis were successful and the Iranians missed? Had Allah smiled on the Iranian bombers, would the UN have convened another of its hot-air confabulations? Imagine, Iraq's president, Saddam Hussein, in possession of atomic bombs. Would the Saudis sleep as comfortably then as they do now? Would Jordan's King Hussein? Would the Syrian Machiavel, Hafez al-Assad, or anyone else in this enormously volatile area?

The nations of the Middle East and for that matter all the peace-loving nations of the world ought to be sending the Israelis bouquets. And let us be spared any more of the Arabs' emotional sonorities about International Law. The Iraqis are at war with Israel. They want to be at war with Israel. They like to be at war with Israel. In fact the Hon. Saddam Hussein seems to relish war as fondly as the late Benito Mussolini, though Hussein butchered a lot more of his countrymen in pursuing high office than did Mr. Mussolini.

Many of those now ardently criticizing Israel apparently are ignorant of the vicious and mercurial nature of Israel's enemies. They seem to doubt that any foreign peoples would ever be ruthless or unreasonable. Thus they favor ceaseless dialogue and public relations as instruments of diplomacy. Such people are simply ignoring the nature of international politics.

The goal of all serious political activity is control, generally control of one's enemies. If one is insufficiently powerful to subjugate one's enemies, one scales down one's ambitions. The difference is between choosing an offensive or a defensive policy. The third option is taking no action at all.

The Israelis will never be powerful enough to subjugate their enemies, and they cannot opt out of their political situation. Hence they are condemned to a defensive strategy, and their air strike last month was a masterful show of defense. Their critics wish they had exercised the third option and done nothing.

This is the option that the West has been most comfortable with over the past 35 years. Those who prescribe it essentially see foreign affairs as apolitical. They refuse to accept that there are struggles for influence going on in the world. They deny that there are malevolent forces. They believe all disagreements are reasonable disagreements. Always they counsel restraint.

By practicing restraint the West has prospered. Every year more and more fashionably dressed people parade along the Champs Elysees, the Via Veneto, and Central Park South. Life is sweet; all is well.

But the grim truth is that in an increasing number of countries around the world life has become hellish. And as the Western powers withdraw their influence, allowing the liberal order in international relations to be extinguished, the future of world peace itself is increasingly left in the nervous hands of men like President Saddam Hussein. I for one do not like the drift of things. As the citizenry of the West continues to cut deals abroad and live the high life at home more and more woebegone immigrants from foreign barbarism drag themselves to Western shores. It is an ominous sign.

The countries of the West abound with Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans who have lost the struggle for political control in their countries. The Israelis understand the meaning of these signs. The outcome of the war in Southeast Asia should constitute the great political lesson of the late twentieth century. The Israelis appreciate this. They do not want to become the next wave of boat people.

For over three decades the Israelis have steadfastly accepted the imperatives of their political condition. A nation of under four million, they have endured in an ocean of 134 million hostile faces. During this time dozens of peoples have had their culture snuffed out. Yet the irony is that by accepting the imperatives of their political condition the Israelis have actually gained a degree of acceptance in that hostile ocean that their present critics would never have prophesied. More Arabs today view the Israelis as tolerable than ever before. In this turbulent and bloody-minded area the Israelis have been the only truly effective peace-keeping force. The Lebanese understand this. The Egyptians understand it. Do the diplomats of the West understand?□

Adapted from RET's weekly column syndicated by King Features.

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ANIMAL RIGHTS

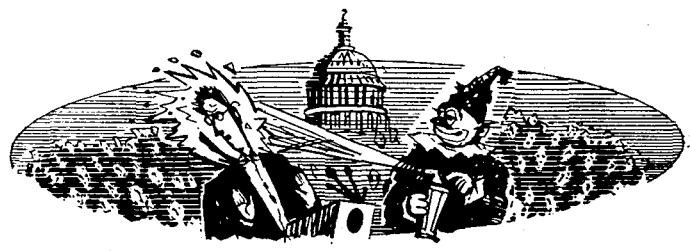
by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

As the baseball strike lengthens and our national despair grows, let us never forget that what brings most of us out to the great baseball pastures of the major leagues is something more than ancient ritual or star-spangled existentialism, as the learned and profound Dr. George F. Will would have it. What brings Americans out to the ballpark is the spectacle of animals. The noblest of the animals are, of course, on the field; the most amusing are rioting in the grandstands, pouring beer on each other's tee shirts, braying at the undertaker behind home plate, and otherwise comporting themselves in ways that are marginally criminal.

Now we have discovered that there are also animals amongst the management. I speak of the owners, many of whom are apparently quite piggish. Certainly their behavior this summer has been piggish. After years of lavishly bidding up the value of their players they now rebel. They have built up a formidable strike fund and provoked a strike by trying to renege on their player compensation agreement. As recompense they offer the players nothing. Would management in any other labor dispute expect such a gift? How about offering the players chauffeur-driven limousines to the ballpark? How

(*continued on page 43*)

CAPITOL IDEAS



PHRASE MATING

by Tom Bethell

As I write, there is still a certain amount of distant rumbling, as of a receding thunderstorm, in the wake of the Israeli raid on the French-built nuclear reactor near Baghdad. Writing about international affairs has always struck me as being more than normally fraudulent; John Lukacs made this point very well in his recent excellent article, "Easter in Warsaw," in *National Review*. But the cries of alarm now that we have one less atom-bomb manufactory to worry about strike me as being quite exceptionally absurd.

The main problem with people like George Ball, an eminent purveyor of this kind of thing, and a number of newspapermen, of whom Philip Geyelin of the *Washington Post* is characteristic, is that they live in a wholly paper world, the dimensions of which do not exceed a standard-sized briefcase. Ball, Geyelin, and a small army of like-minded professors, have found that it is possible to make a decent living by trotting out a rather limited repertoire of wise-sounding phrases with overtones of a laboriously acquired expertise—"peace process," "initiative," "accord," and so on—and it is not long before they start believing that this semantic world has a tangible, external reality.

The truth, of course, is that it is a world inhabited by abstract nouns, passive verbs, participial phrases, and gents in pinstriped suits. George Ball is not without his skills. He can parley with a preposition, argue with an adverb, joust with a gerund. But I don't think he knows a great deal about what goes on beyond the confines of his briefcase.

The phrase-mating internationalists naturally spend a good deal of time meeting other people, and thus sustain in themselves the illusion that they live in the real world. The problem is that they meet mostly with other people exactly like themselves, more often than not at the United Nations or some other such carefully constructed theater of delusion, the function of which is to benefit its occupants.

The characteristic feature of those who toil away with abstract nouns at places like the United Nations is that they believe there is no problem in the world that cannot be solved by rewording a communiqué or rewriting a resolution. They imagine that the real emotions of love, fear, hatred, hope, and envy that animate people can somehow be transformed by syntax, or brought into more harmonious relationship by a mere show of hands.

George Ball, I notice, writes in all seriousness about "international rules," as though they really existed outside the imagination of deluded diplomats. The Israelis, with their brief and yet ancient history, are realistic enough to understand that all the diplomatic initiatives, peace accords, treaties, dialogues, negotiations, and quiet diplomacies in the world cannot parse away the hatreds and enmities that boil inside the human heart.

• • •

A few months ago I wrote in a

Harper's magazine article about budget cuts:

> If your wife were to come home with assorted packages under her arm, claiming that she had just saved you money by foregoing even more expensive purchases, you would probably think this was an odd way of getting richer. Similarly, it is an odd budget cut that is billions higher . . .

Before this was published, the copy editor suggested to me that "wife" be changed to "spouse"—not, I hasten to add, in any spirit of dogmatic allegiance or ideological solidarity with the feminist cause, but simply, as she wearily explained to me on the telephone, to prevent the hail of angry feminist missives that inevitably would come flying airmail into *Harper's* offices.

I thought about this and eventually decided that I had already seen too much truckling, and too many white flags of surrender run submissively up various editorial flagpoles—"he or she," "congressperson," etc. By way of example, turn back to almost any issue of the *New Republic* edited by Michael Kinsley. Not that he is truckling to anyone, of course. I think he actually believes that if "he or she" appears in print frequently enough then the glorious day will arrive when babes emerge from the womb with genitalia

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Tom Bethell is *The American Spectator's* Washington editor.

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as interchangeable as pronouns.

So I demurred, and the passage remained unchanged. (Can anyone doubt that wives really do most of the shopping, by the way?) Well, it turned out the copy editor was right because the epistles from the feminists arrived as predicted. In one of them I was excoriated in characteristically Marxist terminology as a "lackey." Another tried to argue that she could hardly be expected to understand what I had written because she was a woman and therefore didn't have a wife. Can you beat it?

Anyway, I've tried to think a little about this weird business of feminism which clearly is one of the most militant, unquestioned, and unopposed dogmas of our day. At first, a few years ago, I thought it might be comparable to one of those irrational medieval crazes that occasionally swept through Europe, or perhaps something on the order of the tulip mania that temporarily unhinged the Dutch in the seventeenth century. But feminism, I fear, is more than a fad. And it is a great mistake to imagine that it is on the wane, as some seem to think. Tom Wolfe got this exactly right when he pointed out that the isolated howls of the 1960s became the "background noise" of the seventies. Feminist attitudes that seemed extreme in the sixties have not disappeared; they are simply taken for granted today.

There is *something*—and we must determine what it is—some new element in the social tapestry that has unleashed and sustained this feminine rage; turning females into feminists, thence into radicals, finally causing some to "pupate" into the Hive of collectivism, wherein they will spend the rest of their lives as identical and interchangeable worker bees of socialism, buzzing angrily about the stage of life, railing against reality, and forever, endlessly, trying to transform it (as they themselves were transformed) into something unnatural.

The key to this whole horrible mystery, surely, is Sex. It isn't "equal pay for equal work," or affirmative action, or any of the other items on the egalitarian agenda. It is Sex, the ultimate expression of inequality between men and women. (The act of procreation is a partnership which can take about a minute of a man's time, but must take nine months of a woman's time. And there are many other profound inequalities associated with Sex, which I won't go into.)

The egalitarian ideology of today's feminists is a reaction to something that happened earlier, and unless I'm much mistaken that something was the Pill.

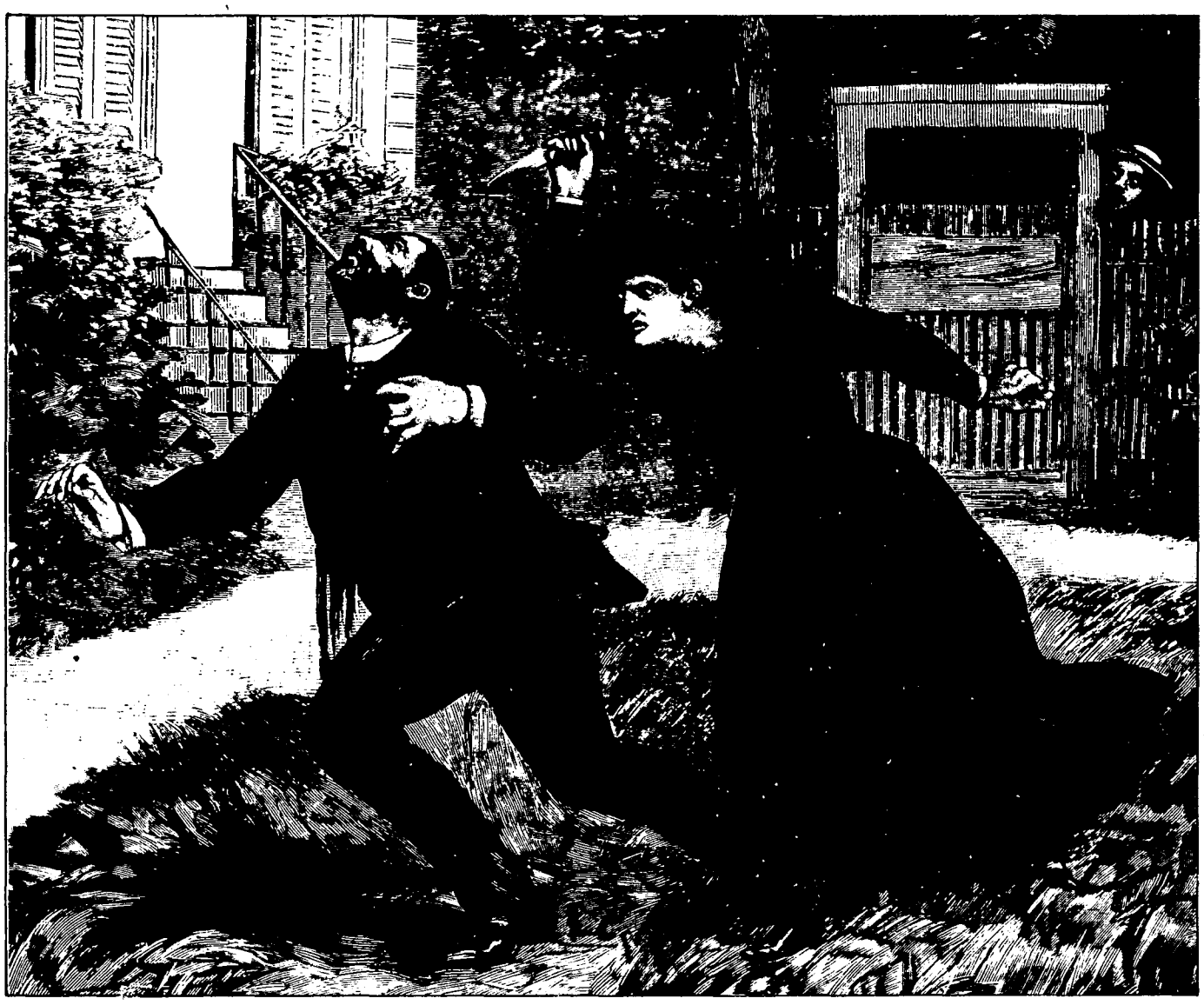
The Pill had the devastating effect of breaking down, in a very few years, the elaborate and precarious ritual of premarital behavior between the sexes. When sex, as in pre-Pill days, very likely resulted in pregnancy, or could reasonably be expected to do so, and abortions weren't so easy to get either, then men as a rule behaved chivalrously and respectfully toward women. There was considerable social pressure for them to do so. If the woman became pregnant (it was far less likely to happen to the man), the man was expected to "do the decent thing" and marry her.

As a result women didn't "get screwed" so often. Is it not highly significant that this verb, and a rather more forthright one in the same vein, use sexual intercourse as a metaphor to establish the idea that someone has been taken advantage of?

But with the advent of the Pill, there no longer seemed to be any such thing as "disadvantage" connected with the sex act. Since it was now simply something that felt nice, and had nothing to do with procreation, how could any rational, humanistic, twentieth-century person claim that anyone was being disadvantaged by it? Sex therefore became a "free" good. With children no longer a necessary consequence, why not indulge in it? Women at that point began to find it much more difficult to come up with persuasive reasons to say "No" to persistent males. So they said yes, many of them, and many of them got screwed as a result; although with some of them it would take a year or two or three to discover the second sense in which they had been screwed.

Some feminists might even partially agree with this analysis, but others will notice the tremendous heresy at the center of it. Implicit in what I am saying is the belief that sexual promiscuity is much more damaging to women than it is to men. I have no doubt that this "double standard" is realistic, however. Those with children who doubt this may reconsider their position if they will only imagine the following: You have a teenage son and daughter, both are out on "dates," both are late returning home. Are you not more solicitous for your daughter?

Looking back over the past 20 years, the really amazing thing is that the feminists have actually embraced the idea of sexual liberation—the very trap that had been constructed by scheming males with lust and nothing else on their minds; and into which only the most gullible of young ladies could be expected to fall. The feminists, so smitten have they been by the general idea of liberation, accepted the Playboy philosophy of Hugh Hefner; "receiving in themselves," in the words of St. Paul, "that recompense of their error which was meet."



I gather that there are factions within the women's liberation movement that now repudiate the idea of sexual liberation. Ellen Willis had a very long article in the *Village Voice* addressing this subject recently. I read it, but couldn't understand a word, so abstruse were her arguments. But, as things stand, the Pill has indeed given birth, and a grizzly offspring it is: the Women's Movement. If I am correct, the Movement will be with us as long as technology survives, unless the Food and Drug Administration steps in and bans the Pill. On the other hand, the existence of a virginal radical feminist, who has never in her life so much as seen the Pill, would entirely disprove my thesis. If there are any such feminists, do drop me a line won't you? And to feminists in general, I say, do get in touch. I know you are looking forward to writing, and it is always a pleasure to hear from you. □

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Robert Skidelsky

THE INVOLUNTARY UNEMPLOYMENT OF JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES

How the apostles of Keynes became Keynesian apostates.

Keynes has become a dirty word to many people. The easiest way for any economist to make a name for himself is to attack the fallacies of the Keynesians. The decline in Keynes's reputation has done wonders for the reputations of long-standing critics of Keynesian economics like Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek. The name of Keynes has become something of a liability to governments which for years worshipped at the shrine, thus confirming that in politics there are only marriages of convenience. The decline in the political utility of Keynesian economics has in turn weakened the cause of political moderation, giving fresh life to the two traditional, and in political terms, antagonistic anti-Keynesian ideologies: Marxism and laissez-faire capitalism. The old conflict between authoritarian central planning and market economics which Keynes seemed to have transcended has returned. Statist and socialist economics on the Left; attacks on the Welfare State from the Right: These are the twin political fruits of the Keynesian era.

What has brought about the great disillusion? Chiefly, I think, the realization that after thirty years or so of Keynesian economic management we are back to where we started, but with a seriously constricted range of attractive options. That is to say, we are experiencing once more the levels of unemployment which the Keynesian Revolution had abolished—13 percent in Belgium, 10 percent in Italy, 10 percent in Britain, 7 percent in the United States—only this time round, unemployment is accompanied by high rates of inflation. This inhibits Western governments from acting to expand demand on the old Keynesian lines in an effort to increase employment, for to do so might just as easily increase inflation. Modern Keynesians say the only solution to this dilemma is incomes policy—wage and price controls. But this implies either legal coercion, which is highly unattractive, or centralized agreements between governments, trade unions, and business leaderships which have not only been unattainable, except for short periods, but which also carry disagreeable implications of corporatism.

We have also, since the 1930s, lost a certain amount of innocence about the workings of government. In the nineteenth century, enlightened opinion was virtually united in its mistrust of the state. The ills of economies were ascribed to political interference. For much of the twentieth century, the reverse was true: The maladies of economies—poverty, injustice, high unemployment—were ascribed to laissez-faire or insufficiency of government. Government was viewed as an unexplored, or at least unexploited, political resource, available to correct the "flaws" of capitalism. Keynes believed this; so did the welfare economists; so did the social democrats. Since the 1930s the potentialities of government have been much more fully exploited, and the results have been found wanting. As early as 1960, the British economist J.R.C. Dow found that fiscal policy as pursued by British governments was actively destabilizing. The old view that the state was always available to compensate, in a relatively costless way, for "market failure" is now seen as having been much too simple. Often we do not solve problems by making the state responsible for them. We simply transfer the problem from the private to the public sector; in the course of doing so, we saddle governments with what Professor Anthony King has called "growing reach and declining grasp."

That the name of Keynes should have come to be associated with inflation and the spawning of bureaucracy is an ironic verdict on someone who loathed both. It was Keynes who wrote "There is no subtler, no surer means of overturning the existing basis of society than to debauch the currency"—and whatever Keynes had in mind, it was not to overturn the existing basis of society. It was also Keynes who insisted that his proposals were the only alternative to authoritarian central plan-

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ning. "Those who do not realize this," he wrote in 1940, "have not grasped what the Americans call 'the big idea.'" How then has his revolution come to be associated with results which, in many respects, were contrary to his intentions? Was it his fault? Was he perhaps naive about the economic and political consequences of Mr. Keynes? Or was his revolution absorbed by other developments which deflected it from its original purposes? Would we have had growing inflation and bloated government even had there been no Keynesian revolution?

Let us start with the question of Keynes's own responsibility, which involves, first of all, asking what he set out to achieve. We must be clear about one thing. Keynes did not come to praise capitalism; but he did not come to bury it either. His aim was to make a decentralized system—what he called an "entrepreneur economy"—work with less damaging fluctuations and at a higher level of continuous employment than was the case between the wars. "It is certain," he wrote, "that the world will not much longer tolerate the unemployment which . . . is associated . . . with present day capitalistic individualism. But it may be possible by a right analysis of the problem to cure the disease while preserving efficiency and freedom." His object was to abolish slumps by stabilizing booms.

In his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money,* published in 1936, Keynes argued that in an entrepreneur economy there was no presumption that investment would be sufficient to maintain continuous full employment. That it had succeeded in maintaining a "reasonably satisfactory average level of employment" in the nineteenth century was due to a conjuncture of special circumstances which had passed away. Given the inescapable uncertainty surrounding future events, the likelihood was that a part of what was produced would not be spent, but would be hoarded, or kept liquid, for the purpose of speculation or as a precaution against future loss. The role of government in the Keynesian system was thus a double one: to improve the conditions of confidence—to give businessmen confidence that the system would last, that property rights would be maintained, and that the demands of workers would be restrained; and at the same time to make sure by fiscal and monetary policy that total spending in the economy would equal full employment output. In practical terms this meant that any increase in businessmen's pessimism about the future must be offset by increased government spending to compensate for an increased propensity to hoard. Keynes was quite aware of a possible conflict between the two roles of government. Increased government spending, he warned Roosevelt, might depress private investment by an equal amount even in conditions of high unemployment if businessmen were worried by the objects of the expenditure or the methods by which it was financed. In short, he recognized the possibility that government policy may itself be the cause of the pessimism for which government spending then had to compensate. This line of thought has been developed by monetarist economists who argue that it is discretionary variations in the money supply which play the major role in destabilizing the entrepreneur economy.

In retrospect, nothing is more striking, given Keynes's emphasis on uncertainty, than his own confidence in the future. As the Great Depression gathered force in 1930 he wrote an essay entitled "The Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren." In it he argued that by keeping employment and investment continually high for a couple of generations, governments would be able to solve the poverty problem once and for all, freeing Western man to tackle his "permanent problem—how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy his leisure, which science and compound interest will have won for him, to live wisely and agreeably and well." Of the poverty and looming political revolt of the Third World, there is not a hint in Keynes's writings.

Can Keynes, therefore, be indicted for fatuous optimism spilling indiscriminately into a panoptic sanguinity about the future? It is important to bear in mind the very restricted nature of the problem to which he saw his technique as an answer, as well as the very provisional character of the answer he gave. The *General Theory* was directed to explaining and remedying one segment of unemployment only—what Keynes called "involuntary unemployment." This excluded both frictional, seasonal, and regional unemployment, and, much more importantly, all unemployment caused by "a refusal . . . of a unit of labour . . . to accept a reward corresponding to its marginal productivity." These two types of unemployment could not be reduced by the macroeconomic policy of expanding demand in the product markets, but only by microeconomic measures to increase the efficiency of labor markets. Labor was involuntarily unemployed *only* when it wished to work for a reduced real wage but was unable to do so, because it could not reduce its real wage by accepting a lower money wage; any reduction in the money wage causing the general price level to fall leaving real wages unchanged.

Now there is little doubt that involuntary unemployment—the unemployment of those willing to accept but unable to get a lower real wage—has greatly declined since Keynes's day. Yet, as Professor Meade has pointed out, Keynesian policy since the Second World War has ignored Keynes's own distinction between voluntary and involuntary unemployment and has treated virtually all unemployment as susceptible to reduction by expanding demand; the end result of which is a static or declining level of employment maintained by increasing doses of inflation. The discriminate reasoning of Keynes—not the indiscriminate reasoning of Keynesians—

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underlies Professor Friedman's notion of a "natural" rate of unemployment. Unpalatable though the conclusion may be, the constant reiteration by the British Prime Minister that workers are "pricing themselves out of jobs" is, under modern conditions of trade union organization, strictly in accord with the letter of Chapter 2 of Keynes's *General Theory,* though not perhaps with the spirit of the book as a whole.

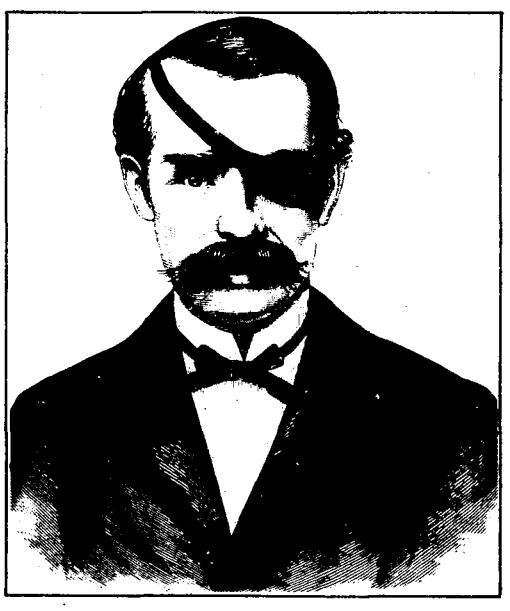
Secondly, Keynes was much more modest than many postwar Keynesians about what his technique could achieve in reducing even "involuntary unemployment." In reply to a critic, he wrote in 1936:

> I agree that our methods of control are unlikely to be sufficiently delicate or sufficiently powerful to maintain continuous full employment. I should be quite content with a reasonable approximation to it, and in practice I should relax my expansionist measures a little before technical full employment had actually been achieved.

("Technical full employment" in the strict Keynesian sense included, we must remember, an allowance for a lesser or greater volume of "voluntary unemployment.") These considerations allow us to infer that Keynes himself would have regarded the project of running the economy at a one to two percent level of unemployment by demand management alone as quite unrealistic. Whether he would have drawn the conclusion that full employment policies in the new era of trade union bargaining power, job protection legislation, generous unemployment benefits, and a public ethos of government responsibility for economic welfare, required statutory control of incomes is impossible to say. Keynes was torn between his hatred of wasted resources (postponing the moment of liberation from "pressing economic cares") and his hatred of bureaucratic interference with liberty. He would at any rate have exerted his great authority to forestall our present hopeless impasse in which governments are increasingly reduced to governing through the leve of mass unemployment as a consequence of their failure to tackle earlier the growth of trade union power.

If Keynes can be faulted for failing to spell out more clearly the political and industrial consequences of the attempt to maintain permanent boom conditions, he was also guilty of considerable naiveté about the *modus operandi* of the political system which he supposed capable of bringing about these conditions. He had an excessively elitist or oligarchic view of the political process, one which he bequeathed to his disciples. Believing that public life was and should be managed by an intellectual and moral elite, his only concern was that the existing elite had the wrong ideas and was in need of conversion. Once converted, it would then act rightly. This view made him unduly dismissive of certain "fixed rules" of finance of bygone eras which were meant to curb a perceived inherent tendency of rulers towards extravagance and dishonesty. One thinks particularly of the balanced-budget rule and the gold-standard rule. This was not just a matter of Keynes failing to take on board the political consequences of democracy, well known at the time; for the rules devised to restrict the scope of government action by restricting its access to funds were devised, and therefore thought to be of more universal importance, long before the rise of Western democracy. Rather it was that in his eagerness for government action on unemployment Keynes was willing to jettison the wisdom of the nineteenth century, drawn from the experience of earlier times. The problem in the nineteenth century was to prevent rulers from robbing the wealth-creating sector for the purpose of military conquest or extravagant display. By rejecting the full employment assumption of the classical economists, Keynes saw that state spending, even on "useless" projects, could maintain output and investment at levels higher than they would otherwise have been. But his theory lent itself all too readily to the following vulgarizations: a) that state spending for any purpose was good since it kept up demand; b) that public spending was better, since in some sense more "rational," than private spending; c) that budget deficits were the only way a capitalist economy could be kept going; d) that people who insisted on strict rules of finance were killjoys who believed in progress only through pain. The possibility that governments, armed with democratic mandates, might use pseudo-Keynesian legitimations for purposes quite other than Keynes intended, and in fact destructive of the values Keynes believed in, seems not to have occured to him.

Given that Keynes had found a rationale, albeit austere in comparison with that of modern Keynesians, for governmental activity to ameliorate unemployment, he then had to justify and develop a governmental response to the edginess of capitalists which results when government sustains high levels of employment. In other words, having dealt with consumption, Keynes now had to deal with investment. His *obiter dicta* concerning the pathological propensities of bankers and other apostles of "sound money" gave much pleasure to generations of Cambridge students. But a serious flaw in political thinking is revealed by Keynes's comment that the state "is in a position to calculate the marginal efficiency of capital goods on long views and on the basis of the general social advantage." Keynes was rightly critical of the capitalistic process by which investment decisions emerged as the "byproduct of the operations of a casino." That investment decisions taken by the state might emerge as a byproduct of a political roulette seems also not to have occurred to him.



Another example is equally instructive. In 1944 Keynes read von Hayek's *Road to Serfdom.* It was, he told Hayek, "a grand book . . . Morally and philosophically I found myself in agreement with virtually the whole of it." He went on:

> I should therefore conclude your theme rather differently. I should say that what we want is not no planning, or even less planning, indeed I should say that we almost certainly want more. But the planning should take place in a community in which as many people as possible, both leaders and followers, wholly share your moral position. Moderate planning will be safe if those carrying it out are rightly orientated in their own minds and hearts to the moral issue . . . Dangerous acts can be done safely in a community which thinks and feels rightly, which would be the way to hell if they were executed by those who think and feel wrongly.

Understandable as this comment appears at the time—when Keynes was very alive to the fact that Hitler had been the first practicing Keynesian—this is actually an inadequate response to Hayek, for it ignores the fact that the enlargement of the state which Keynes wanted itself alters public and private morality. Not for the first time, Keynes attempted to cover up an inconsistency or ambiguity in his own position by means of what is little better than a clever debating point.

Keynes, therefore, must take some responsibility for legitimizing, through omission and a propensity to avoid pointed criticism, certain misapplications of his doctrine, although he is less responsible for its economic than for its political waywardness. These misapplications, however, would no doubt have occurred anyway, whatever the warnings he bequeathed. For as a political formula Keynesianism was too valuable to be restricted to the economic uses for which the founder intended it. Its limited legitimation of government deficit spending could well be adapted, by vulgarization, to the problem of governing a mature/senile capitalism under conditions of mass democracy and powerful trade unions; or to the problem of maintaining an international capitalist system which, at

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the end of the war, was faced with an inexorable need to expand in a world in which it had already permeated every corner. It is no coincidence that the first industrial nation (Britain) should have been the one to have carried Keynesian policy to its greatest degree of refinement over the longest period of time; or that the United States, as leader of the capitalist world, should have made itself responsible, by sustaining a chronic balance of payments deficit, for keeping its major trading partners in a state of boom. The systemic inflation and creeping bureaucratization embedded in the political function of Keynesianism seemed a small price to pay for postponing the day of reckoning.

To understand the demand mismanagement which has led to the present impasse, one must understand how the restricted economics of Keynes became the panacea of Keynesian economists, and how the naive politics of Keynes became the diffidence of Keynesian politicians. The first generations of Keynesian economists must take some responsibility for this mismanagement, though senior Keynesians have been foremost in blaming it on the "stupidity" of politicians. Quite simply, a combination of technical over-optimism and political nervousness caused politicians to promise more than Keynes himself ever promised or than macroeconomic policy could ever deliver.

A classic instance of this technical over-optimism was the so-called Phillips Curve which, on the basis of a historical time series, assured governments of the existence of a stable, and politically very favorable, "trade-off" between unemployment and inflation. In effect, governments were assured that it lay within their power to fix the unemployment percentage at any politically acceptable level without running into significant inflationary problems. It all seems madness today; yet for ten years, until Milton Friedman's demolition job, the Phillips Curve reigned virtually unchallenged.

Technical over-optimism was reinforced (and partially induced) by political pessimism. The first generation of Keynesians, as products of the Depression, had no faith in the "natural" resilience of the entrepreneur economy. It was held that a mature capitalist economy had a natural and increasing tendency towards depression or "stagnation" which could be offset only by increasingly higher levels of public spending. And in order for capitalism to be accepted by the non-entrepreneurial classes, there also had to be increasingly higher spending on the social services—something to which Keynes himself had never attached much importance. The first generation of Keynesians tended to be social democrats in politics; and Keynesianism entered politics as a social democratic formula, in which high levels of public spending performed the double function of maximizing output and employment and redistributing resources from rich to poor. The humanitarian impulse behind this strategy is unquestionable. The political analysis is more dubious. It was based on the assumption that the legitimacy of capitalism was so precarious, its wealth-producing potential so enfeebled, that it required continuous political reinforcement if it was not to collapse into either fascism or Communism. The notion that 5 percent unemployment spelt political death for any government which allowed it, and a "crisis of legitimacy" for the system as a whole, was for long an article of faith that united economists and politicians until disproved by events.

So much, then, for the contribution of the postwar Keynesians. But of course the blame was by no means theirs alone. The professional opinion of economists that maximum output could and must be continually maintained by political action coincided with other pressures on the political system working to the same end; it was the two in combination which drastically altered the fiscal stance of modern governments, giving rise to the familiar democratic pathology of the "overloaded" state. Its chief symptom was the permanent budget deficit, now called the "public sector borrowing requirement." In the nineteenth century governments borrowed from the public only for war emergencies. In the twentieth century Keynes made loan-financed public spending respectable if done for the purpose of restoring an economy to full employment. He also sanctioned a larger permanent role for the state in creating capital assets. This, of course, implied a continued though limited public sector borrowing requirement, since the government would have to borrow to invest, like any private businessman. Beyond this Keynes was very cautious.

One part of his doctrine, however, did lend itself to much more radical fiscal conclusions. This was the theory that it is investment which creates savings, not the other way round as the classical economists had taught. This led by easy steps to the debased doctrine that all government spending creates its own revenues. There opened up a wonderful vista wherein public spending up to any level that was thought politically necessary would itself promote the growth to finance it. Keynes's own insight that government spending may become a source of diminished business confidence, thereby diminishing the very investment it was meant to augment, tended to be replaced by a wholly mechanical link between public spending and the output of goods and services. If the growth failed to materialize, the consequences of such policies became inevitable: a bloated public sector in deficit to a private sector whose own resulting shortage of funds had to be made good by printing more money. This was the general experience in the 1970s; and explains the revival of the "crowding out" argument—the conservative thesis that government borrowing competes with private borrowing, driving up the rate of interest and impairing private investment—which Keynes was thought to have killed. It is true that in his political pamphlets for Lloyd George, Keynes made sport of "crowding out," arguing that the same illogic which states that government crowds out business means that businesses ought also to crowd each other out, and that therefore aggregate investment could never be raised. It clearly can be, because businessmen have a variety of psychological impulsions to increase investment

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regardless of the rate of interest. But what modern Keynesians do not realize, and what Keynes did realize, is that these same nonrational impulsions are debilitated by the blow to confidence which results from large government deficits (and only secondarily from the borrowing required to finance them).

The gamble that loan-financed public spending would under virtually all circumstances produce the growth to finance it becomes understandable in the light of the political problems facing Western governments. These governments were committed to maintaining mature capitalist systems under conditions of genuine mass democracy. On the one side were the needs of capitalism which included not just an expensive array of public goods, but also the assurance that property rights would not be tampered with, the latter presupposing a definite limit to taxation. On the other side, governments were responsible to electorates the majority of which controlled a minority of wealth and looked to state action to compensate for this deficiency. It is this pull of incompatible requirements which explains the character of the "competition for votes" which developed after the Second World War, and the increasingly desperate faith that public spending could induce the growth which would provide the wherewithal to keep both parties happy. Once this double set of expectations had been developed, its self-sustaining character made it extremely difficult for governments to change course once adequate growth had failed to develop. They were trapped in the circle of their own pseudo-solutions. Large sections of business and the general population had become dependent on inherited and automatically expanding public programs. Even though the rationale and to some extent the political support for them had eroded, they could not be reduced without plunging the economy into a depression. The permanent budget deficit with its attendant inflationary consequences is a good illustration of how Keynes's own limited solutions to quite precise problems were perverted by political necessities into pseudo-solutions for much more general and unrelated problems.

In the international sphere, "world Keynesianism" has been adapted to the political necessities of America's role as leader and protector of a pluralist bloc of capitalist democracies. Here again, Keynes's own proposals, over-ambitious as they seemed at the time, were models of financial caution compared to what followed. Keynes wanted to retain the advantages of the old gold-standard system (chiefly currency convertibility at fixed exchange rates) while eliminating the savage deflationary adjustments which the old system had prescribed as the only alternative to the Protection and competitive devaluations which broke up the world economy in the 1930s. To this end, he devised a set of institutions and rules, only partially embodied in the Bretton Woods Agreements of 1944, to ease the pain of adjustment. Initial responsibility for adaptation was to fall on creditor countries, debtors being given a "breathing space" in the shape of credit facilities and permission for moderate devaluations to put their houses in order. In practice, the postwar monetary system developed without any effective adjustment mechanism at all. No pressure was brought on either surplus or deficit countries to bring their current accounts into equilibrium. World demand was maintained at a high level through the structural deficit in the American balance of payments: the international equivalent of the pseudo-Keynesian budget deficits. The growth of this deficit proved the only way of combining the politically required level of free world prosperity with the maintenance of relationships of military dependence and political and economic independence in the American-led alliance structures. With the explosion of the American deficit due to the Vietnam war confidence in the dollar was eventually undermined, leading to the suspension of gold convertibility in August 1971. Even more than in the case of the permanent domestic budget deficit, the permanent U.S. balance of payments deficit is a striking example of the pseudo-solution with a built-in self-destructive momentum.

Finally, full employment policies have had to be applied in a world of public and private monopoly. Giant private corporations, nationalized industries, municipalities, and trade unions have all functioned, to a greater or lesser extent, as monopolistic suppliers of goods and services. The unhesitating and unreflective extension of full employment policy to the needs of this world can be seen, first, in the dropping of Keynes's own distinction between voluntary and involuntary unemployment which proved unacceptable to the trade union leaders, and second, in the failure to demand any quid pro quo—a wage-price policy, restriction on strike action, labor market reforms—for the full employment service being provided. It is easy to show how, in the absence of incomes policies, trade unions and business oligopolies can between them push up prices even when labor and goods are in excess supply. How important this "cost-push" has been as a cause of inflation is doubtful. It applies mainly to the monopoly sectors of such highly unionized countries as Britain. And it stretches credibility to maintain that in Europe as a whole (including Britain) there was excess labor supply in the 1950s and 1960s, when unemployment was at one or two percent and when there was a massive influx of foreign labor.

The cost-push theorists maintain that trade unions cause inflation. But this is unlikely in the case of the United States which is less unionized than most European countries. In America, the inflationary pressures which built up in the 1960s are more plausibly ascribed to the lack of *external* discipline on public and private spending—the result of the privileged position of the dollar in the international monetary system. But even where trade unions are more important, one can still maintain that governments cause inflation by making political commitments to overfull employment which give unions the power to force them to expand the money supply to "save jobs." I would prefer to say that governments cause inflation, and cause themselves to grow, and cause themselves to lose authority; but only on the understanding that throughout this process politicians are acting in the way which seems to them the easiest to overcome their immediate political problems.

All governing formulas which break down tend to discredit the kernel of scientific truth or plain wisdom which they contain. Just as neoclassical economics was blamed quite wrongly for the failures of laissez-faire (despite the fact that it was used to support egalitarian welfare policies), so Keynesian economics has been blamed for the growing decay of political authority despite the fact that it contributed to three decades of unparalleled prosperity. What I have tried to show is how the Keynesian remedy for a specific disease of capitalism (involuntary unemployment) was turned into a pseudo-Keynesian pseudo-solution to the much more fundamental problems of governing divided societies, thereby bringing the inevitable crisis and reaction.

Whether this deterioration of Keynesian policy into an all-purpose governing formula was inevitable is difficult to say. Marxists would no doubt say it was. Vulgarized Keynesianism, they would argue, was the only way to salvage a decaying capitalism perceived to be on the brink of imminent collapse, at the cost of

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intensifying its contradictions in the future. I would prefer to lay more stress on the failings of political systems which trap politicians in short-term calculations. Harold Wilson's dictum that "a week is a long time in politics" explains much of what has gone wrong in the application of Keynes's ideas.

But perhaps a more fundamental problem arises from the inherent limitation of any economic technique, however soundly reasoned, as an instrument of governing. Governors and governed must in the end speak a common language, and it cannot be the language of Keynesian economics. Common to Keynesians and the politicians who used their ideas was the belief that somehow one could "model" the whole economy, pull certain levers, and expect certain results to follow more or less mechanically. Politicians, of course, were expected to communicate what they were trying to do. But they did not adequately understand the techniques they were using (except in an immediate political sense)- and no one understood their explanations. So when, as was inevitable, Keynesian results fell short of expectations, Keynesian politicians were left with nothing to communicate to the public. From this point of view, the increasing reversion by politicians to the simpler language of nineteenth-century economics reflects not just disillusionment with the results of pseudo-Keynesianism, but also the need of politicians to regain an audience as a preliminary to the revival of the art of government. After all, it is much easier to understand homilies on the virtues of individual self-reliance—which can be derived from extremely sophisticated moral and economic argument—than it is to understand any comparable simplifications of Keynesian economics. From another side, protective communitarian approaches to economic life can be much more readily communicated in the language of socialism or nationalism than in the language of Keynes. The reaction against the Keynesian sophistication of economic discourse has already started (Margaret Thatcher and Wedgwood Benn in England, Ronald Reagan in the United States) and there is no knowing where it will end. This clear indication of the decline in the ability of Keynesian economics to do "political work," however, should not blind us to the genuine "economic work" which Keynesiansim accomplished, even in its bowdlerized form; or lead us to belittle the genius of the man who set out to "create the possibility of civilization for all." □

Fred D. Baldwin

RISING ABOVE PRINCIPLE: THE CONSERVATIVE PUBLIC INTEREST LAW FIRM

If PLUG, NORML, and GLAD are "traditional," where does that leave conservatives?

The "public interest" law firm has become so much a part of our political system that it comes as a surprise that, as an institution, it is scarcely more than ten years old.

There were, or course, antecedents. At the beginning of this century, Louis Brandeis, the spiritual father of the American "public interest law firm," brought lawsuits as a private citizen on matters ranging from child labor to Alaskan wilderness protection. Setting the tone for most public interest law since his time, he wrote that lawyers should be more than the "adjuncts of great corporations." After World War I, Roger Baldwin formed the American Civil Liberties Union to combat the "Red Scare," and in 1930 the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund began its long march through the courts with a campaign that was, in the words of its director, "carefully planned . . . to secure decisions, rulings and public opinion on the broad principle instead of being devoted to merely miscellaneous cases."

Nevertheless, the first ready-for-anything public interest law firm dates only from 1969: the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), founded by its first executive director, Charles Halpern, with major assistance from Ralph Nader. Its stated purpose was to "counter-balanc(e) business representation with public interest representation on questions of federal government policy." Dozens of new groups sprang up almost immediately. Environmental law firms were the most successful in and of themselves, and Nader's helping hand got several others off to a strong start.

Today, over a hundred private organizations regularly engage in "public interest" litigation. The total includes firms representing minorities, consumers, environmental interests, and various single-issue groups, but it does not count the dozen "support centers" of the federally funded Legal Services Corporation. (Support centers provide ideas and expertise for the approximately 340 local legal services projects which, for the most part, do unglamorous but needed work for low income clients.) There are at least 14 organizations litigating for feminist issues, 14 for the disabled and handicapped, eight for prisoners and ex-offenders, and four for homosexuals. The firms show at least as much panache in coining acronyms as in writing briefs; witness the Public Law Utilities Group (PLUG), the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), and the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD). (A significant victory on interstate railroad rates for recycled metals was once won by Students Challenging Regulatory Agency Procedures.)

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Most public interest law firms epitomize what Theodore J. Lowi has called "interest group liberalism." That is, their sponsors and staffs equate the public interest with increased bargaining power for special interests on the assumption that the clash of clout, not argument, will chisel the public interest out of a mass of competing claims. They prefer arriving at decisions through negotiation and adjudication between separately competing parties, as opposed to accepting a legislative consensus in which their clients would often be at a disadvantage, or, more accurately, have to contend with many conflicting interests at once. Ironically, about the only interest that firms claiming to represent this most rubbery concept—the public interest—refuse to acknowledge is that widely accepted arbiter of *economic* interest, the free market system. The overwhelming majority of public interest law firms are either ideologically hostile to capitalism, or, as a matter of tactics, they demonstrate an eagerness to expand federal activity at the expense of the private sector. The "public interest" has been a code word for "liberal."

But conservatives are beginning to follow the liberal lead, though only a few firms have been formed to date. In 1973 several attorneys who had worked within Ronald Reagan's California administration formed the Pacific Legal Foundation-California, which now has a dozen full-time attorneys and about two dozen other employees. A few years later, six firms were conceived with help from the National Legal Center for the Public Interest, which continues to provide them with technical and moral support. The record of one of these firms, the Mountain States Legal Foundation, achieved some degree of national attention with the appointment of its former president, James G. Watt, as Secretary of the Interior. As in the case of liberal public interest law firms, there are some hybrids and fellow travelers, which, though not law firms strictly speaking, perform as if they were. For example, the Chamber of Commerce maintains a litigating arm, but it is more like a trade association. It is explicitly business-oriented and has not attempted to avail itself of tax-exempt status for contributions.

Naturally, the established liberal firms have counterattacked. In a recent *Mother Jones,* for example, Ralph Nader had this to say about the Capital Legal Foundation, a Washington-based firm: "Capital is a right-wing group designed to do things for business that business lobbyists would be ashamed to do openly, or would not do for strategic reasons."

The conservative firms take attacks by Nader in stride; indeed, they relish them. Lately, however, they have been shaken by criticism from an unexpected quarter—a report by a lawyer with a strong free-market commitment. He concludes the only significant study to date of conservative public interest law firms not, as Nader does, by attacking their motives, but by questioning the efficacy and, secondarily, the appropriateness, of their means.

The lawyer, Michael Horowitz, is now with the Office of Management and Budget. He had previously made unsuccessful attempts to secure financial support to establish his own public interest law firm, and last year he got the next best thing: an invitation from a foundation, which has provided much of the seed money for the conservative firms, to do an analysis of the public interest law movement, focusing on the accomplishments of the conservative newcomers. The report, delivered early this year, was intended to be a limited-circulation document. But once "limited" exceeded "two" in Xerox-happy Washington, copies were not hard to come by.

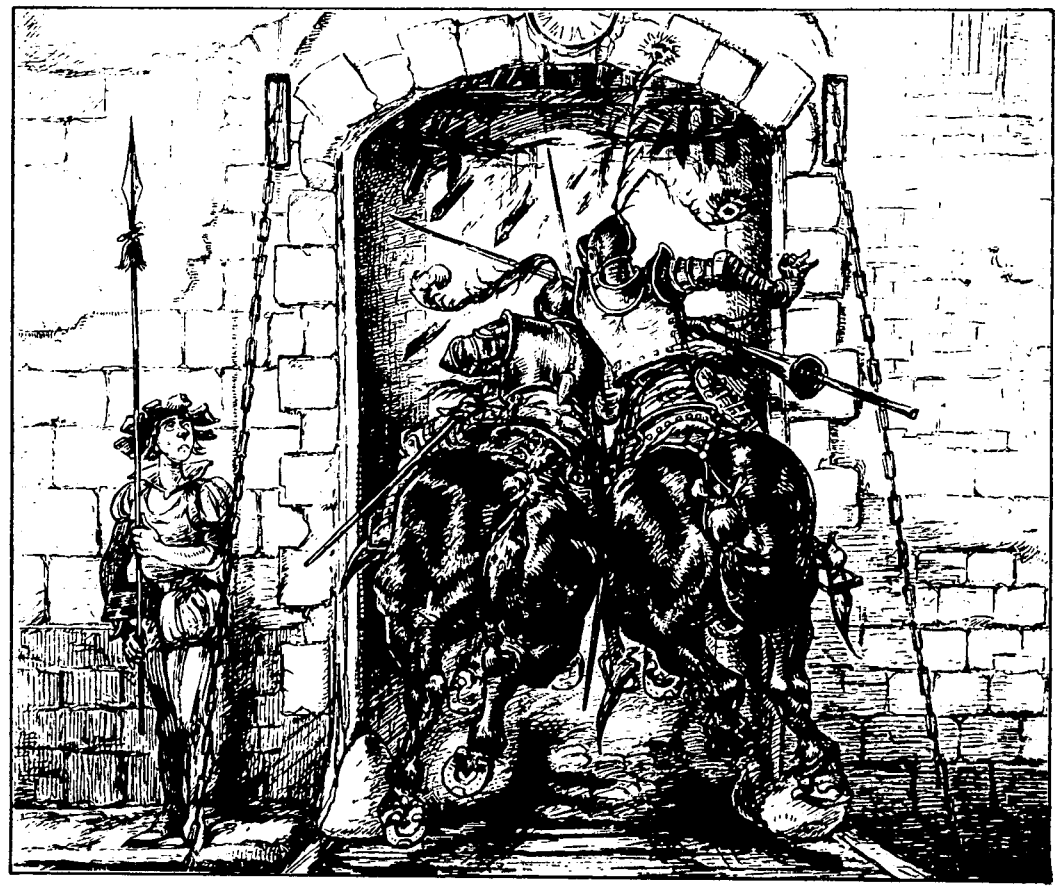
Horowitz began by tracing the astonishingly successful record of the liberal movement and professing how important he thinks it is for conservatives to challenge "the moral monopoly" claimed by left-leaning "'public interest' pretenders." Then, as an old Southern joke has it, he "quit preachin' and went to meddlin'."

First, he wrote, the liberal charge that conservative firms are dominated by business interests "is unhappily not wide of the mark for many such firms." Of course firms committed to the free market often find themselves in natural sympathy with business perspectives. Some firms have tried to impress potential corporate financial backers with a "scorecard" of "won" cases in which all they had done was to ride piggyback on the work of corporate counsel by filing a spate of *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) briefs.

Horowitz sees such petty puffery as symptomatic of a deeper problem: the failure of conservative firms to understand the real reasons for the conspicuous successes of Nader, Common Cause, the environmentalists, and the other major "traditional" groups. (Horowitz faced a semantic problem, illustrative of the question-begging nature of the term "public interest." Groping for a suitable collective adjective to refer to the non-conservative groups, Horowitz could do no better than "traditional." It is an odd word for PLUG, NORML, and GLAD.) This failure has been both psychological and tactical. From the start, Nader and his allies recognized the importance of seizing the "moral high ground," appropriating to themselves the term "public interest" by virtue of sheer repetition. They relied on concrete courtroom victories for publicity, but they were also aware that beneath the ephemera of public opinion lies the real ground for victory: the public imagination whose cast ultimately determines who wins in court, and much, much more. Accordingly, they supplemented litigation by forming study and action groups at law schools and universities and by co-opting the federal bureaucracy.

"The Washington lawyer," Joe Califano once wrote, "rarely litigates cases; rather, he tries to appoint judges." The liberal groups have understood that. They succeeded brilliantly at it under President Carter, who, with the advice of panels "carefully monitored and substantially influenced by the traditional movement," appointed approximately 40 percent of all currently sitting federal judges.

Horowitz found the conservative groups disappointing for further reasons, reasons which had more to do with savvy and tech-



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nique than with understanding and mobilization. He found that the conservatives failed to explain to donors the need to achieve "critical mass"—expansion to a size that permits specialization on issues and improves the ratio of time spent on legal work to time spent on fund-raising. There was also a failure to develop in-house expertise because of over-use of outside firms. Finally, the conservative firms betrayed an insufficient appreciation of the importance of a substantial legal presence in Washington, D.C., especially for negotiations at the staff levels of the federal bureaucracy. In short, Horowitz says that most conservative public interest lawyers lack both imagination and a strategic sense.

All this is not to say that the firms in question have no rejoinders to Horowitz, but the fact remains that his report could be one of the better things to have happened to them. His perspective, after all, is that of an expansionist. They may not like his criticisms, but they cannot object to his conclusion that they should be bigger and more aggressive.

Another old joke comes to mind, this one out of the Southwest. "All this state needs," a Texas land promoter declaims, "is more water and a better class of people." "That," the skeptic replies, "is all hell needs."

The punch line sounds like Ralph K. Winter's comments on the Horowitz report. If Horowitz is a conservative who approves of conservative public interest firms but only wishes they would shape up, Winter—a professor of law at Yale and an adjunct scholar of the American Enterprise Institute—is a conservative who disapproves of public interest law firms on principle. Winter believes that conservatives have no business "copying the left." "All it does," he says, "is legitimate what the liberals are doing—including liberal judges."

All public law firms, Winter continues, "lead to a misuse of the courts." A court should be an independent institution for settling disputes, by fitting the intent of the legislature to the disparate facts of each case. For public interest lawyers, an idea replaces the client, who then becomes a mere "shadowy figure whose name appears in a caption."

Ah, but we live in wicked times, and isn't it necessary, as Oklahoma's late Senator Kerr used to put it, for conservatives to "rise above principle"? Winter says "No." More important, Winter believes that in trying to exploit judicial activism, conservative firms sacrifice principle for nothing. Judicial activism is inseparable from ideology; courts are activist because they are packed with liberal judges. "It's a foolish battleground," he insists. "If you legitimate it, you'll just lose more often."

Confronted with such criticism, lawyers in conservative public interest law firms muse that it must be nice to teach law in New Haven, but they cannot stand idly by while liberals are stealing the store. One response, more measured than some, comes from Ben Blackburn, President of the Southeastern Legal Foundation (SLF) in Atlanta. (Blackburn is a former four-term Republican congressman, chairman of the Heritage Foundation, and was a member of the Reagan transition team.)

"I deplore the fact that the courts have put themselves into this policy-making role," he says, "but we have to face reality. Unlike Congress, a court does not have a mechanism for going out to gather facts. Anyone who has a case is expected to come in and make it." Blackburn emphasizes that lawyers hostile to free enterprise crowd forward to put their views into evidence; if such testimony goes unrebutted, it becomes easy for a judge to make an unbalanced decision on the basis of the record before him.

The practicing lawyers insist that what they are trying to do has to be evaluated by looking at actual cases. A few examples may help.

In 1973, an organization called the Carolina Environmental Study Group began a suit that resulted in a ruling of a federal district judge that the Price-Anderson Act, which limits the financial liability of utilities in the event of a nuclear plant disaster, was unconstitutional. Duke Power Company and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission appealed, but felt it could win more cheaply by resting its case on a challenge to the environmental group's legal standing to sue, rather than by attacking the merits of its argument. The SLF, newly arrived on the scene in 1977, concluded that even if the industry won its appeal on a technical point, it would have left the industry under a cloud, for every future bond prospectus would have been required to note that the highest court that had ruled on the actual merits of the case had found Price-Anderson unconstitutional.* The SLF accordingly filed an *amicus* brief on broad public policy grounds, and, though it is impossible to say that this was the determining factor, the Supreme Court, now forced to address the substantive legal issues, did uphold the Price-Anderson Act.

In another action the SLF filed an *amicus* brief in a "reverse discrimination" case abetting a successful action on behalf of union workers who felt they were discriminated against by an affirmative action consent decree negotiated by the steel industry. The industry lawyers simply wanted out with the least pain possible for their particular clients, while the SLF insisted on raising a point of principle. Blackburn said that in the steelworker case, U.S. Steel (one of SLF's contributors) was unhappy at having its agreement with the government overturned because that meant it would have to start all over again. This is not at all unusual; several public interest lawyers interviewed said that business firms are likely to settle, rather than fight, particularly if they fear bureaucratic reprisals. Cases like this are possible responses to the charge that conservative public interest firms are in business's pocket.

While the SLF demonstrates its inde-

*Since Price-Anderson provides a non-cash subsidy to the nuclear power industry, it is hardly a model of free market legislation. On the other hand, the liberal attack on it through the courts was hardly a model of the democratic process.

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pendence by taking cases *farther* than business wants to go, Dan Burt's Capital Legal Foundation shows its autonomy by taking cases from a range of interests far *wider* than that encompassed by the business community. Ralph Nader's attack in *Mother Jones* suggests that Capital is a hard-hitting, competent threat to the liberal firm's claim to moral superiority. (Nader's choice of targets may also have been influenced by Capital's near completion of a comprehensive study of the far-flung Nader empire, a study much like those Nader and his associates have done of their adversaries. Nader, incidentally, was invited to document his charge for this article, but declined to answer the letter.)

Ironically, the very attributes which make Capital such a threat in the eyes of Nader serve to disarm his charges. For Burt, a top-level Yale Law School graduate who left a lucrative private career for public interest work, picks cases that will further the aspirations of the working class and "radical middle" with which he identifies himself. He refuses to file *amicus* briefs. And he insists that Capital not represent clients who can afford to represent themselves.

The firm's business clients have been small operators. It won a victory for a small vendor making $12,000 a year (referred to Capital by a U.S. Small Business Administration staffer) who was fined $40,000 for violating child labor laws by hiring ghetto kids to hand out fliers. Burt is considering a legal attack on milk subsidies, probably to be brought on behalf of a black orphanage.

"A case has to sound like a bell in society," Burt says. And if these cases give Capital a ring similar in sound to what Horowitz calls a "traditional" public interest law firm, consider the case that has rung out most clearly and is still reverberating: *Simer* v. *Olivarez*. At the end of the 1980 fiscal year, the Community Services Administration found itself with $18 million in unspent emergency energy assistance money, which, because unspent, was supposed to revert to the Treasury. A firm funded by the Legal Services Corporation brought suit on behalf of eight poor clients who claimed that they "and all others similarly situated" were entitled to the money. CSA took a dive. That is, it agreed to settle for a consent decree which would permit it to do the very thing it wanted to do in the first place—spend the money. Thus, after agreeing to an award of $250 to each of the named low-income clients, CSA averred that it would be infeasible to distribute the remaining money directly to the poor. For the remaining $18 million (less $2,000) CSA "consented" to fund a variety of energy-related programs and to hire four new staff members to administer them. To cap the deal, it agreed to put $200,000 into "organizing and coalition building" and $1.8 million into the National Consumer Law Center, funded by the Legal Services Corporation and CSA. In short, the federally funded public interest lawyers won nearly $16,000,000 for new CSA projects, nearly $2,000,000 for themselves, and, to be fair about it, $2,000 for their poor clients.

Alerted by a *Wall Street Journal* article, Capital brought suit on behalf of Senators Orrin Hatch, Paul Laxalt, and Edward Zorinsky. As a result, U.S. District Judge John F. Grady of Chicago vacated his own order, noting that no one pointed out to him that he had in effect created several new programs not authorized by Congress —the very danger of omission which forms the kernel of Blackburn's reply to Winter. A congressional committee is also investigating "collusive settlements," in which a federal agency pretends to be "compelled" to do what it already wants badly to do, but which, to borrow Nader's phrase, it is "ashamed to do openly."

In fact, *Simer* v. *Olivarez* may be the real reason Nader directed his fire at Capital, which not only won a moral victory but denied its potential adversaries a rich prize of federal dollars. To use a military analogy, it was no border skirmish, but an attack on the "traditional" firms' supply lines. "After ten years of status as the unquestioned young idealists," Horowitz says, "the traditional public interest lawyers have become less moral than other interest groups. They're into power, cutting phony deals, and are so imbued with their sense of moral superiority that they can do immoral things."

Even traditionally liberal groups—those who remain most loyal to their original idealism—sometimes agree. Burt joined forces with the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League on a case involving hiring quotas, and says he also received warm NAACP congratulations when adverse publicity forced the Carter administration to back off. Similarly, the SLF found itself on the same side as the ACLU in a suit filed against the Federal Election Commission (which had on its side the litigation arm of Common Cause). In this instance the SLF and the ACLU persuaded the Supreme Court that FEC rules violated First Amendment rights.

Where does all this leave us? Horowitz is clearly right that the conservative public interest groups have not had anything like the influence of their "traditional" counterparts, and he has raised the two most important criteria for judging success. The first is moral—all public interest groups should give their first allegiance to making an honest attempt to see the unrepresented public interest victorious over special interests, however much honest men may disagree over exactly what "the public interest" means. The second is strategic—long-term institutional impact.

Whether or not Horowitz's strictures against the existing firms are justified is less important than what such firms can hope to become in the future. Can conservative public interest firms be expected to meet his two standards? On this score Ralph Winter's skepticism is understandable, and his cautions well-taken. To the

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charge that he is unrealistic, Winter cites several areas of law in which a principled conservative position which seemed unrealistic a few years ago has already gained wide acceptance. You have to keep hammering away on behalf of principles, he says, even when they work against your temporary advantage. For example, he would be well disposed toward a public interest firm devoted to helping state attorney generals do a better job of pleading before the U.S. Supreme Court. This would sometimes help "liberal" causes, but its long-term effect would be to strengthen federalism.

In the short run, however, it is hard to see who would have nailed CSA in *Simer* v. *Olivarez* if Capital had not. Moreover, it is not just a matter of hoping that, as Mr. Dooley observed, courts will "follow th' iliction returns." On a fundamental level, Horowitz agrees with Winter that conservatives cannot indefinitely play "me too" to interest-group liberalism. They must in any case be buttressed by the ascension of conservatism in the broader body politic, which ultimately chooses judges and makes the laws they interpret. The moral criteria for judging success thus must precede and define the strategic ones. The real challenge is to find cases which neither merely reflect business interests nor depend on a conservative version of judicial activism. Such cases, as the work of Capital shows, should demonstrate a principle on which conservatives and liberals once agreed: that all American citizens, including the poor and minorities, have a stake in a free market economy under laws passed by elected legislators, rather than privileges rationed out by bureaucrats and judges. □

Morris Freedman

ELLIOT COHEN AND *COMMENTARY*'S CAMPUS

We really weren't as stuffy as it may sound, or perhaps we were.

My first appearance in *Commentary,* in its third issue, in January 1946, was with a short story. I had just begun teaching at CCNY. For more than a decade after that, I regularly contributed fiction, essays, reportage, and some criticism. Two of my sketches were written furtively, as a release, during the last months I was working on my doctoral dissertation in Butler Library at Columbia University. Before I became an editor on the magazine, in 1953, I was on the faculty at CCNY, and when I left, it was to go to the University of New Mexico. As writer and editor, I found the atmosphere in the office more that of a campus than of an editorial enterprise. I can hardly think of my interlude at *Commentary* as a break in my academic career.

Elliot Cohen, who founded the magazine and was editor-in-chief when I worked for it, seemed at times to think of himself as the dean of a small and fractious faculty. He enjoyed reminiscing about his graduate school days at Yale, where one of his fellow students had been Marjorie Nicolson, under whom I did my doctorate. He had earned his bachelor's degree at Yale and sported cuff links which carried a small replica of the university's seal with its Hebrew letters. One day, Martin Greenberg, with whom I shared an office, remarked to me after noticing the cuff links for the first time, that Elliot's Jewishness had finally gone to his head. I remember saying that maybe Yale had gone to his head. When I returned to the office one afternoon from a Modern Language Association convention down the street, a major occasion for academic recruitment throughout the country, Elliot greeted me with his sweet crooked smile and said he'd match any offer I got.

One time Elliot and I were talking about campus quotas against Jews, which, of course, were relaxing after the war but had been scrupulously, not to say notoriously, observed during the twenties when Elliot went to college. He told me he had once thanked the dean at Yale, after the two had become friends, for its quota system. "I knew I'd never get into Yale," Elliot told me, "on the basis of my record. I had no relatives who were alumni. So I concluded that I got in because I was one of the few Jews who had bothered to apply, and I said this to the dean." The dean, who happened to remember the circumstances of Cohen's admission, was amused. "You might thank Yale for its quotas all right," he replied, "but you didn't get in because you were a Jew as I recall. You were the first applicant we had had in years from the state of Georgia."

Commentary's properly academic respect for creativity, authority, and precision could be observed at once in its earliest tables of contents on the outside front cover and in its very text. Poems and stories were listed with the same emphasis as articles. Names of contributors were among the academic and intellectual aristocracy in the United States and Britain. Although its copy was always near impeccable, the magazine was rarely available to subscribers or newsstand buyers before the actual month of issue, suggesting a sort of academic inclination to be meticulous rather than merely on time. At least two editors read every word every issue. When Sherry Abel was interviewed by Bob Warshow for the job of preparing text for the printer, Cohen said he wanted to know only one thing: Did she have a passion for commas? Her reply, that she had a stong sentiment for them, quite satisfied him. It was Sherry who taught me some of the subtler and more esoteric aspects of proofreading and layout; she

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was scrupulously patient about shaping a good-looking page. Early in *Commentary*'s history, before its substantive character had quite become known in New York's publishing world, a *New Yorker* editor at a cocktail party complimented Warshow on the high quality of the magazine. Bob's pleasure was only slightly diminished when he realized that the comment had simply to do with the cleanness of the text.

Every one of the editors in my time had credentials at least as familiar in universities as in publishing, and several went on to join faculties. (I merely returned to one.) Martin Greenberg was an early translator of Kafka. Clement, his older brother, who was involved with Elliot in founding the magazine, had already achieved importance in the academy for his critical work on modern art, much of it published in *Partisan Review,* and later in his book, *Art and Culture.* Bob Warshow's pioneering critical essays on movies, also in *PR,* influenced the introduction and character of film courses in colleges and universities. Nathan Glazer, who worked with David Riesman on *The Lonely Crowd* while still on the staff, resigned to join Jason Epstein in developing Anchor Books, the paperback library that revolutionized college teaching. Later, he joined the faculties at Berkeley and Harvard. Irving Kristol left to be secretary of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom and, at various times and among other things, co-editor of *Encounter* and of the *Public Interest,* a professor at NYU, and a free-lance conservative *éminence grise,* which included doing a column for the *Wall Street Journal.* Midge Decter was beginning her career as an essayist and editor. Norman Podhoretz, its present editor, had just begun writing for *Commentary* when I was on the staff.

In my free-lance magazine writing, for *Commentary* and other publications, I had interviewed celebrities in science, medicine, and entertainment. At Columbia, I had assimilated some of the arrogance of the campus, where one daily rubbed shoulders with one or another international intellectual dignitary. Still, it took an effort at first to overcome my plain awe working in the offices of *Commentary,* adapting to its heady elitism, brushing against, say, James T. Farrell, James Baldwin, or Hannah Arendt in the corridors, being introduced to them while I was on the run with some editorial task. One day, Jimmy Baldwin, sitting in my office, recounted his unhappy adventures over a weekend with Paris police and a Paris judge, which had nothing to do with his being black and which reminded me of Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London.* I suggested he do a piece for us, "Free and Equal in Paris." As I worked with a range of contributors, and fell into the routine habit of making decisions about texts, including those of personages, my awe dissipated, and I took as routine my dealing with names.

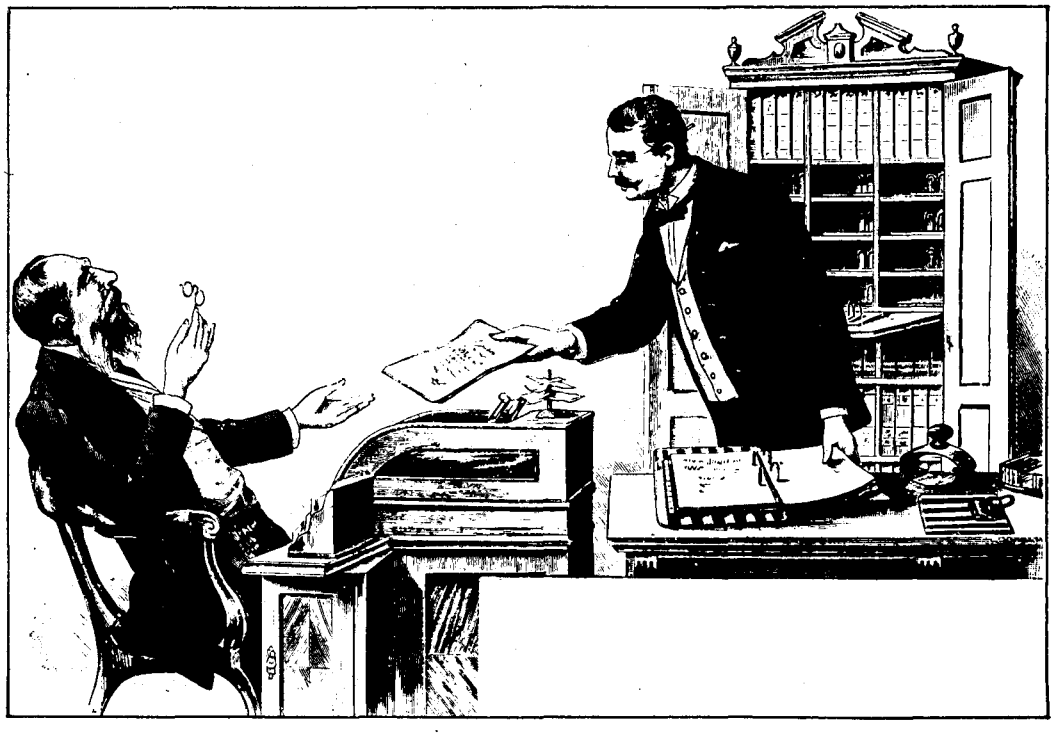
All this, too, was a form of academic activity. Students and professors early on learn that they are somehow most properly involved in appraising and reappraising claims to importance. Academics in the humanities keep reading and re-reading texts, always aware that they are determining a lasting, true, inner value. Revaluation is a continuing process in which great names are put down or reputations refined, and lowly or unknown names raised up. At first it seemed presumptuous to be passing judgment all the time on some of the important writers of our time and in such purely practical terms as suitability for publishing (either something by the eminences themselves or something about them). But it quickly seemed natural and proper to be involved in the staff's regular and impersonal determination of what and who was intellectually and esthetically respectable and important, and what and who not. (We really weren't as stuffy as it may sound, or perhaps we were. The wife of a colleague, listening to a discussion at a dinner party about television wrestling, exclaimed, "It's amazing what *Commentary* editors know and will talk about.") At few campuses and in few editorial offices do similarly ambitious and possibly pretentious and arrogant processes of determination go on. Most professors and editors prefer not to engage in the risky and slippery business of sustaining a perpetual inventory of the world's thinkers and makers and discovering new ones. Most prefer to work with people the establishment has already evaluated and classified.

Commentary was a peculiarly New York phenomenon; it is hard to imagine it thriving anywhere else. New York openly cheers eminence of achievement. One gawks at celebrities in a New York theater lobby; in London, one may nod to a respected famous face, or courteously ignore it. Inevitably, I was acutely aware of the intellectual heroes of the magazine, which prided itself on always knowing who was in and who out. The editors knew well the politics of fame, as precisely as Lady Bracknell knew the fashionable and unfashionable sides of a street. Ordinarily, because we were in the business of contributing to reputation in some way, most of us were blasé and relaxed with at least our own stable of names, if not actually cynical on occasion.

Commentary was unique in American publishing from its inception. It tried to capture the best features of an unlikely combination and range of intellectual publications: the *Menorah Journal,* which provided precedent for its secular Jewish orientation; *Partisan Review,* one of whose editors was Clement Greenberg and whose pages regularly carried *Commentary* writers; *Foreign Affairs;* the *American Scholar;* the *Yale Review;* the *Virginia Quarterly;* and more general journals, like *Fortune,* the *New York Times Magazine, Harper's,* the *Atlantic,* and, not least, the *New Yorker* in its emphasis on careful writing and in its reportage, criticism, and its columns of "Reflections."

Although sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, *Commentary* was never parochial in its Jewishness. Inevitably, perhaps, it documented what has come to be described as "Eastern" values, although it has been neither fashionably liberal in politics nor middle class in taste. On many occasions writers have taken extremely conservative political positions, even "reactionary" ones, but never, to my knowledge, any narrow party ones. The magazine remains emphatically anti-Communist and anti-Stalinist. Although it has been called anti-Zionist and even anti-Semitic, the charges always came down to the formula that if you weren't with the accusers in exactly their way you were against them. It used to be called "assimilationist" because it never descended to the simple-minded and defensive puffery common in Jewish house organs.

Important leaders in the Reformed,



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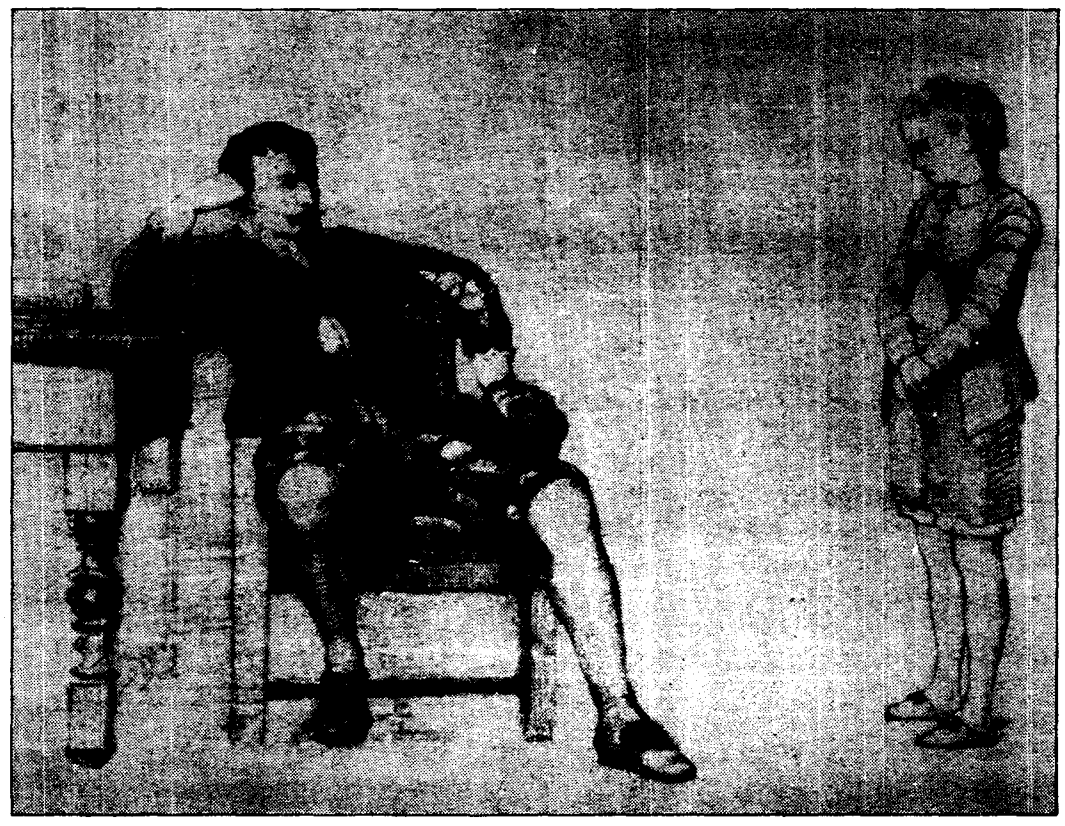
Conservative, and Orthodox rabbinate in the United States over the years contributed essays on important issues. One of the magazine's common modes has been that of Talmudic *pilpul,* tight reasoning, close analysis of text or argument, careful sifting of evidence, but with minimal casuistry. The concerns of the magazine were early defined, as much in editorial practice as in manifesto, as those of civilized, middle-class, well-educated, intellectual, alert, curious, thoughtful, reasonable, reasoning, non-defensive people, ready to have their commitments enriched, challenged, or revised. The editors never thought of their readership as exclusively Jewish. Of course, the magazine included many readers who subscribed out of a pietistic gesture toward Jewishness or toward intellect and culture and were frequently angered or puzzled by particular articles. And, also of course, good numbers of altogether knowing and serious readers, Jewish and not, were, and continue to be, outraged by *Commentary's* stance on this or that issue. I have heard many readers deplore the magazine's increasingly "political" emphasis under Podhoretz's editorship. Nevertheless, the magazine's early and sustained courage in defying in so many ways various establishments in this country, including major Jewish ones, testified to the strengthened place of Jews in American life after World War II. It was possible, at last, to assert that there was no monolithic "Jewish" position on anything.

Commentary gathered and gave coherence to a growing and increasingly liberated American intellectual population, heavily Jewish, predominantly academic, politically activist, which needed to crystallize and voice its concerns and articulate a variety of responses. The editors had a predilection for bold, iconoclastic academic writing, and, one way or another, we got professors of law, literature, history, sociology, religion, and international affairs to appear in *Commentary's* pages with what sometimes became "position" papers. Later journals like *Encounter,* the *Public Interest* (edited by *Commentary* alumni), and the *New York Review of Books* reflect not only *Commentary*'s pioneering efforts in sustained intellectual journalism and reflection but its list of contributors over the years. (In spite of Woody Allen's notion of merging *Dissent* and *Commentary* to form "Dissentary," *Dissent,* with its narrow ideology, seems to me to help define *Commentary* more by contrast than by similarity.)

Commentary began publication in 1946, as the country was calming down, reconstituting itself, with the end of World War II. Every month it had items with some Jewish slant although the concern, the orientation, was always more general. Two continuing features, "From the American Scene," to which I contributed extensively, and "Cedars of Lebanon," reflected a specifically Jewish focus although neither served merely promotional ends. If anything, "Cedars" kept raising the nagging question for some of the editors of whether classical Jewish writing of religious and secular sages, which this section printed in available translated excerpts, could really seem so consistently shallow and beside the point. After Elliot's death, the section was dropped.

"From the American Scene" narrowed in on the American Jewish community but with no ideological slant unless one considered a certain reportorial neutrality itself a slant. Some of my own pieces, for example, on Manischewitz kosher wine, Yiddish theater in the Catskills, Jewish Bohemianism, a community of Jewish farmers in Lakewood, Barton's kosher candies, Gertrude Berg (the creator and star in the radio and television serial about Molly Goldberg and her family), Sam Levenson, Grossinger's, were sometimes characterized as "anti-Semitic," or at least not friendly to Jews, by a certain class of readers, because they revealed "unflattering" facts to *goyim.* There was an outcry when I reported that Harry Grossinger appeared in the training gymnasium in the ring with Joe Louis and Rocky Marciano on Yom Kippur while the resort was otherwise stripped down for a strict Orthodox observance. (At the same time, other readers were calling the *Commentary* office to make reservations for a stay at the resort.) Pat Covici of Viking asked me to expand my two articles on Grossinger's into a book and was surprised to learn that the management of the hotel was not delighted by them.



The magazine, I would say, reflected the character and concerns of the editors more than it did those of the publisher, a circumstance that further contributed to its uniqueness. During my time as an editor, the staff met only once with the magazine's publications board. We heard a strong, carefully argued presentation of an anti-Zionist position, but it was not offered as a directive, merely as the impression of a recent visitor to Israel.

In addition to his vague academic longings, Elliot had a more focused one: to be an influence on the American scene. He had a special respect for public relations in the large social sense and was proud of having been responsible for instituting the daily pollen count issued by the Brooklyn Jewish Hospital. When David Riesman's portrait appeared on *Time* on the occasion of the publication of *The Lonely Crowd,* he was pleased to have one of his insights confirmed about achieving fame in America. He was at the same time disgruntled. Walking into my office, he threw an advance copy of *Time* on my desk. "All you have to do to get your face on the front cover," he growled dourly, "is to introduce a new word or phrase into the language." Another time he told me it was he who suggested to *Time* that the way to emphasize a point in a story was to put it in a footnote. (One of the editorial assistants during my association with *Commentary* was Richard Clurman, who later was to rise to the top levels of the *Time-Life* hierarchy.)

I would meet alone with Elliot every so often to discuss projects. Our meetings late in the day were eerie, the light outside the office windows on West 33rd Street dimming from grey to black, Elliot's pursed mouth grim in his melancholy craggy face that could twist itself suddenly into a dazzling smile. One night we had agreed on some point about the international situation; it derived, I remember, from an article by an English contributor. After a long silence, Elliot lifted his chin and said broodingly, "Do you realize, Morris, we're the only two people in the

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world right now who understand what's going on?'' Elliot was given to megalomaniacal and gloomy pronouncements. After I left the magazine and was settling in at the University of New Mexico, I learned that he was going through a severe depression and could not be left alone. An editor of the magazine was always with him. And not long after that, on a dazzlingly sunlit morning, I got a telephone call from New York that he had committed suicide by putting a plastic bag over his head. The story of his death made national news. He was the first adult on record to die that way.

One of my qualifications that appealed to Elliot was my acquaintance with Yiddish, which I could speak and read passably well. My father, a faithful reader of the *Jewish Daily Forward,* for years had pressed on me the work of Isaac Bashevis Singer. After I had been at *Commentary* a while, my father gathered a sheaf of clippings for me of Singer's series, all in Yiddish, on his father's domestic court in a Polish *shtetl,* which contained occasionally raw passages. I proposed to Elliot that we run them and gave him synopses of several, translating a passage here and there. He sat quietly for a minute, eyes down, head leaning on his fingers, then said, ''Morris, you're forgetting we're a family magazine.'' We did not run Singer in my time. Later, there was some discussion about printing Bernard Malamud's ''The Angel Levine,'' in which a novice black Jewish angel, rebuffed by a skeptical elderly tailor named Manischewitz whose wife is deathly sick, goes to Harlem to wait for Manischewitz's call. He spends his time in a brothel-like dance hall in the company of a half-naked black woman, where the tailor does eventually find him. That story, despite its raciness, did at last appear. Phillip Roth's work also caused difficulty, of the sort that Roth himself recorded in his short novel, *The Ghost Writer,* when the protagonist, a young Jewish writer, is charged by his family and friends with contributing to anti-Semitism through his less than idyllic portrayal of a relative.

Elliot sometimes had a quite ambivalent notion of what might offend *Commentary* readers, and especially ''the community,'' although his concern had little to do, I think, with believing that we should present attractive Potemkin village-like façades to hide ugliness or nothingness. He was committed to ''educating'' the communities, Jewish and non-Jewish, and he believed with some passion, it seemed to me, that truth, sometimes taking unexpected forms, could only be helpful ultimately in a never-ending process of understanding and thus, inevitably, of education. He had little patience with the contention that only ''favorable'' details, invented when necessary, should be publicized about Jews. For example, when one of Grossinger's flacks charged that Mr. Grossinger could not have been in the boxing ring on Yom Kippur, disgust registered on Elliot's face when I told him that the *New York Daily News* had run a photograph the day after of Harry Grossinger with the two prize fighters. The disgust seemed to me his reaction to the attempt to deny a starkly plain fact. When the attack on my article shifted ground to ask why was it necessary to report matters that might give readers ''wrong'' ideas about Jews, he told me to ignore it.

I was often uncertain as to how far I could go in making a point. A bemusing fact I uncovered during the research for my article on Manischewitz kosher wine was that it was enormously popular with blacks, both in large cities and in the rural South. I wanted to call the article ''Wine like Mammy Used to Make.'' My title was vetoed; ''Mammy'' was changed to ''Mother.''

Elliot had become gun-shy in anticipating how something might be read in the community. Isaac Rosenfeld did a wry, personal essay on the observance of *kashruth,* which mused about whether the taboo against mixing dairy and meat products might have to do with some ancient reservation about mixing the sexes. He recounted one or two mildly funny jokes. A delegation of Orthodox rabbis, several in caftans and with canes, waited on Elliot to protest the trifling with tradition. After an hour or so, he group emerged convivially laughing, Elliot in their center. He told us later that he was advised to consult with them in the future if he wanted to run really randy and much funnier items derived from holy text.

Articles about most Jewish community subjects could be counted on to produce some outburst of indignant reaction. Many leaders commonly preferred looking at their enterprises in terms of aspiration rather than of actuality. One of my articles was a report on a suburban Jewish center that purported to be a place of worship and study. The sanctuary for worship was actually a small, architectural gem, almost lost within a vast building of sparely functional and cavernous dining halls and kitchens. The center was designed to meet the needs of caterers. The library for the Jewish studies school stored folding chairs and tables. The loudly threatening president of the center, who called to lodge a complaint after reading the article but before bothering to look at the building closely, was subdued after talking with Elliot and me. I suppose this is the sort of thing Elliot had in mind when he spoke of educating the community. By contrast, my essay on Camp Ramah, the summer camp run by the Jewish Theological Seminary for young people who speak only Hebrew while at camp and practice full daily religious services, was received by the leaders of the Seminary and of the camp with thanks for the perspective offered.

Elliot was especially wary of discommoding the Jewish social agencies in the city although he wanted very much to report their work to a general audience. In his earlier days he had been associated with the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. One of my assignments was to do a piece on adoption, which at the time in New York, as in other cities, was formally supervised by agencies allied with the three main religious communities, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant. This may still be the arrangement. For adoption purposes,

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the religion of the child was determined by that of the mother; of the adopting family, by the father. Black children, unless specifically identified as Catholic, were placed by the Protestant agencies. (It occurs to me that I don't know, and never thought to find out, who took care of children of Jewish mothers and black fathers.) I reported two areas of possibly disturbing import in the practice of adoption in the Jewish community in New York. The adoption agency, which established the roster of Jewish couples it judged suitable to become adoptive parents, worked closely with the one helping unwed Jewish mothers. The office buildings adjoined. One social worker remarked that a banner across the facades might read "You make 'em, we take 'em." Some conflict of interest was inevitable in helping the mothers of the babies to be placed make the decision to give them up. The other sensitive area had to do with the statistic that eleven "absolutely equally suitable" couples, to quote a case worker, were waiting for every Jewish child available for adoption. (I think the agency may have overstated its description of absolute equality among waiting couples to emphasize the disparity between the supply of adoptable infants and the demand for them.) In the agency's view, an Orthodox couple, however suitable otherwise, had a poorer chance to be given an infant than a more secular or a more religiously centrist couple.

As I did with all my articles containing extensive or sensitive quotations, which I could only hope to approximate from notes or from memory, I submitted a draft to the people at the two agencies I had talked with. (In the present piece of writing, I vouch for the spirit of all of the quotations, not their letter.) The president of their board, a prominent figure in New York Jewish and philanthropic circles, raised a vehement protest with Elliot against running the article as written. The agencies wanted us to publish a straightforward publicity puff, to help them in fund-raising. My article was never published, but no other article on the agencies appeared either.

Elliot had great respect for professional social work, which I shared, and I concluded that he finally felt there must be some very good, if arcane professional reasons for not plainly revealing well-established philosophies and practices. I trusted his instinct, which I knew had been made sensitive through experience. Public relations is sometimes best carried on through silence.

In my schooling I had fallen into the common habit of occasionally regarding in a parental light teachers I respected, and I seem to have shown signs of doing so with Elliot. Marty Greenberg gently but firmly cautioned me against thinking of Elliot as a father figure. Elliot did present himself, I noticed early, simply as first among equals. When he said he had to consult with his associates in making a decision, he was not merely stalling. I found Elliot's childlike (sometimes childish), wide-ranging curiosity appealing. He was impressed by professionalism among celebrities. He admired Louis Armstrong and Roy Campanella particularly. "When Campanella puts on his mask and catcher's regalia and gets behind the plate," he once said admiringly, "it's as though he's entering his office to go to work." Once, in the midst of some editorial wrangle, he muttered, apropos of some side remark someone had made, "So he's mature. What's so terribly special about maturity?" He was very proud when his son had a letter in *Life* congratulating it for printing the first picture of Marilyn Monroe with her mouth closed. When I did my article on Sam Levenson, and in the course of writing it established a personal friendship with him, Elliot asked me to arrange a luncheon so that he could meet him. I did so, and Elliot, with the air of a little boy about to meet a favorite performer, asked me if he could invite Abe Raskin of the *Times* to join us.

The dialogues I sustained with Elliot during my association with *Commentary* had the air of those free-ranging, free-associational, speculative talks I used to find myself holding with colleagues in graduate school on long walks around the Columbia campus. I remember a curiously "academic" discussion Elliot and I carried on once about three Jewish young men on New York's lower East Side who had pushed several drunken Bowery bums into the river after inflicting cigarette burns on them. The leader of the young men turned out to have Nazi banners, reading matter, helmets, and German army weapons in his room. I proposed an article, perhaps a piece of straight dense reportage, perhaps an analysis by a psychiatrist or sociologist, with the working hypothesis that the insane hostility was a pathological inversion of anti-Semitism. No article developed from our talk.

The editors often approached subjects with the sort of curiosity that connects disparate disciplines or events, the sort encouraged in fertile academic atmospheres. Clem Greenberg thought important historical or sociological points might sometimes better be made through fiction or reminiscence than in reviews and articles. He encouraged me in my sketches about Madame Vishnak, a character I invented. She was a Bohemian actress from Russia by way of Israel who launched sad salons of roomers and friends in those large apartments with long halls and many bedrooms on Manhattan's West Side, and travelled summers through the Catskills putting on Yiddish plays in "social halls." The time was the twenties and thirties. Clem respected good academic writing and had a quick instinct for identifying the shallow and shoddy, for what passed for thought or talent, for "kitsch," a term he helped make current. He liked to offer piquant, irreverent reappraisals of established literary names in a probing yet grandly confident way. His (and Elliot's) whole manner of responding to contemporary culture was exhilarating. It affirmed the Columbia assumption that mortal men like those around us could daily achieve significance while denying the defeatist attitude I found so common at CCNY, that the best had already been, or was being, or could only be, done elsewhere. *Commentary* reversed Groucho Marx's formulation, that if a country club invited you to become a member, it couldn't be worth joining: If Commentary invited you to write for it, that alone proved your worth.

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I fell naturally into the more narrowly academic modes and idioms of the office, which were, of course, familiar to me, rather than into the harsher, more far reaching ones of New York publishing. The daily air of the office was easygoing and unhurried. Around deadline time, a slight change in atmospheric pressure could be felt, like that on a campus before examinations. Our little dialogues at the water cooler, the substance and attitudes of our editorial conferences, kept reinforcing me in my sense of being on a faculty rather than in a journalistic enterprise in New York, with deadlines, financial concerns, frenzied auctorial and editorial conflicts and preoccupations. No doubt, I was influenced in this euphoria by some sour memories of both CCNY and Columbia. In our office, Marty and I would occasionally find ourselves exchanging appreciations of poets we both had enjoyed reading in school, sparked by some comment in a book review one of us was editing, or by a book we might be assigning for review. We shared an admiration for John Milton. Marty could summon up and recite with relish long passages he liked. He told me confessionally that he had started in the graduate program in English at Columbia immediately after the war, as I had done, but found so uncomfortable those crowded lectures and the barriers between the hordes of students and the remote faculty that he quickly dropped out. Frances Green, the business manager during my time, would report tidbits to us from her office, like the information that Bernard Berenson had renewed his latest subscription for only one year instead of his customary three years. She worried about the increasing use of "a television" for "a television set" and of "drapes" for "draperies." Editors frequently worked at home, calling in suggestions for titles of articles, say, or changes in copy.

Every so often, like any dean, Elliot would try to whip all of us into the office by nine o'clock. Although we worked intensively when at our desks, we felt no hesitation about taking off when the weather was suddenly good. One day in spring, I recall, Bill Phillips of *Partisan Review* came into Clem's office and found him, jacket off, sleeves rolled up, absorbed in editing a text. "What are you doing?" he asked. "Don't you know the Giants are in town?" Clem looked up startled, silently rolled his sleeves down, buttoned them, put on his jacket, and left the office on the run. Clem often got lost in his work. Once, in a frenzy of concentrated proofreading, he rewrote a quotation from a book a contributor was reviewing. The office had no air-conditioning, and on sweltering summer days, one or another editor might take copy with him down to the nearby cool Automat during the afternoon.

The office was surprisingly free of rancorous gossip, however tightly we analyzed and judged manuscripts. We admitted error as readily as we dismissed this or that publishing eminence. Some rejected manuscripts left us brooding with misgivings. Once we got a long, heavily written essay on film from a critic then beginning what became a justly impressive career. We rejected it. When we noticed it in a competitor's pages, we remembered our decision and wondered whether we had made a mistake, or whether the other magazine was just slipping. Although we made quick judgments often, these were substantive and based on text. We knew we weren't publishing immortal prose in every issue. Contrary to some suspicion, we did not have a coterie of contributors, although obviously we did have favorites. We particularly respected a number of British writers, most of

CUSTOMER INFORMATION FROM GENERAL MOTORS

HOW TO USE A SELF-SERVICE GAS STATION

YOU CAN SAVE MONEY BY DOING SIMPLE CAR MAINTENANCE YOURSELF.

Gasoline or diesel fuel usually costs less at a self-service station. But too many people think that filling a fuel tank is all there is to self service. You'll do your automobile the most good if you also include a few simple maintenance procedures.

Most self-service pumps have easy-to-follow directions printed right on them. Before you drive into a self-service station, it's helpful to know whether your car takes leaded gas, unleaded gas, or diesel fuel, and also where your fuel tank is located, so that you can pull up to the proper pump and have the fuel tank close at hand. The type of fuel your car requires should be printed on the instrument panel, and the fuel tank location can be found in the owner's manual.

If you don't find instructions on the pump, here's what to do at most stations: 1. Turn off the engine. 2. Remove the fuel cap. 3. Remove the nozzle from the pump and turn the pump lever to "ON." 4. Place the nozzle in your fuel tank and squeeze the trigger. 5. When the trigger clicks off, remove the nozzle from the tank and turn the pump lever to "OFF." 6. Replace your fuel cap.

There are some things, however, that the directions may not tell you. Fuel fumes are highly flammable, so you should never smoke at a service station. Also, fuel caps are easy to forget and lose, so when you remove the cap try to wedge it in between the door to the tank and body of the car, where you're not likely to forget it. All 1981 and most older General Motors cars have fuel caps that twist on and then click when secure.

When you're filling up, try to avoid topping off your tank, since it may overflow. If fuel does spill on your car, you should wash it off as soon as possible, to avoid paint damage.

After you fill your tank, remember to clean your windshield. If you've been driving in bad weather, be sure to wipe off your side mirrors and headlights, too.

A quick-maintenance inspection can help you spot potential trouble. You don't need any expensive tools—just a good quality tire gauge, a rag or paper towel, an oil can spout kept in a plastic bag, and a jug of premixed windshield washer fluid, such as GM Optikleen.

To check your engine oil, pull out the dipstick, wipe it clean, insert it again, then pull it back out. The oil should be between the marks labeled "FULL" and "ADD." If it's below "ADD," add a quart of the oil recommended in your GM owner's manual.

You should also check the coolant level. Most GM cars have a see-through recovery tank. If the level looks low, add coolant to this tank. Never remove the radiator cap when the engine is hot, because pressurized coolant may overflow and burn you.

Periodically check your brake, transmission, and power steering fluid levels. Your owner's manual tells you how. Remember to keep the windshield washer reservoir filled with fluid, too, especially in the winter when you use it most often.

Most GM cars are equipped with maintenance-free batteries. But it's still wise to make sure their cables are on tight and the ends aren't frayed. Look for fraying, cracks, or other signs of wear on belts, too.

Look at tires for signs of wear or worn-out edges which can indicate improper inflation or the need for alignment. Once a month, you should use a tire gauge to check the pressure. In GM cars, the recommended pressure is on the left front door edge or inside the glove compartment. Recommended pressure is for cold tires, so check them before you drive more than a mile.

You'll be putting self-service stations to their best use if you include maintenance checks in your stops for gas. Your GM owner's manual can be an invaluable guide to proper car care. Please use it.

This advertisement is part of our continuing effort to give customers useful information about their cars and trucks and the company that builds them.

General Motors

People building transportation to serve people

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whom we had never met, whose copy, frequently in longhand, could be sent directly to the printer with changes only of spelling. We also liked the relaxed professional understanding with which most of them accepted editorial suggestions.

We kidded ourselves and our regular contributors. I remember Bob Warshow once laying a bundle of pages on my desk. "Here's another unformed blob of protoplasm from so and so," he said, naming one of our more distinguished writers. "Make a baby." Another time, he entered our office, laughing. "We've kept this guy's short book review nearly two years, and suddenly we're on the phone to the West coast asking him to approve our changes immediately. He wanted to know what was happening." Once Marty passed on to me the galleys of an article he had just finished proofing, in which then Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson was identified as being from Iowa. I circled Iowa and turned to Marty. "Benson is a Mormon," I said. "He's from Utah. He's an official of the church." "Oh, those *goyish* places west of the Hudson," Marty replied, with a wave of his hand toward the river, "all sound the same, Iowa, Utah, Ohio, you know." Marty had an old-fashioned academic respect for authorship. Occasionally, I would suggest that we carry some editor's name as co-author for an article on which the editor's work was more in the nature of collaboration than editing, and Marty would vigorously demur, insisting that the first creator, however unshaped or misshapen the original product, must be given full and exclusive credit. He was also proud of the magazine for listing poems with the same emphasis as articles. He would spend much time editing out dashes. "Matter of pride," he once murmured to me apologetically, to explain holding back a manuscript from the printer.

I tried to be oblivious to the larger grubby world of New York cultural intrigue, centering around publishing, of which *Commentary* was inevitably part. The coarse, pushy, undisguised self-promotion of petty entrepreneurs was sadly evident every day. The magazine was regularly charged with one kind of betrayal or another, sometimes in serious enough places. In one piece, editors and contributors to *Commentary* were lumped with writers and editors of establishment news weeklies as "prostitutes." It turned out that the critic himself worked for *Time;* when caught out, he claimed he did so only part-time. Snide personal envy or plain political hostility could be plainly discerned in many published comments about the magazine or its writers and editors. Some contributors, it was true, who cultivated an expertise in the ways intellectual reputations are established and exploited in this country, engaged in long campaigns of self-aggrandizement, like well-planted moles in international espionage. Minimal gesture over the years was made to return maximum profit. Huckstering, rib jabbing, was as common among *Commentary*'s several circles as among pushcart peddlers and their gross customers in New York's street markets. I wondered sometimes whether the main talent cultivated by some people moving through and around our offices wasn't that of self-promotion only, so few were their contributions, and so shallow. They were professional careerists, skilled in the higher *schnorring.* They had a nose for what would sell at any moment, and they persisted in pushing themselves. *Commentary* early on was a main stop on New York's Grub Street. Perhaps because I had seen enough less talented self-entrepreneurs in the academic world, I was not especially repelled or appalled by these types in our offices. They were bolder, often more clever, and sometimes had a *chutzpedik* dash. (Given a critical study of Henry James to review, one indefatigable *nudnik,* we learned later, went out to read the novels for the first time.) The dominant manners of carriage, however, were Nat Glazer's, say, with his boyishly sensitive directness and candor, Irving Kristol's efficient, intelligent, and impartial bluntness, and Bob Warshow's grace. I was not much bothered by Elliot's indecisiveness, even with its heavy toll of editorial breakage, although it evidently annoyed many.

I didn't get to know Bob Warshow as well as I should have liked. We used to lunch together, and we had long quiet talks while strolling. One time, a would-be contributor, after I introduced him to Warshow (then managing editor), brusquely cut me out and invited Bob to lunch. Later, Bob ruefully excused the man as having been "anxious." Bob was always gentle and thoughtful, troubled about bruising the feelings of rejected contributors, and about not being able to satisfy those people who would have liked to be an editor like himself. He once spoke sadly about the young men and women sitting in his office and staring longingly in silent envy at him and his surroundings. He enjoyed going to his movies before dinner. "That way," he explained, "I feel less guilty, especially if the movie is a bad one. It doesn't take away from the day, and the evening doesn't begin until afterwards anyway." He was a subtle editor, able to carve out from some mountain of unpromising ore just the small lode we were looking for. It troubled him that *Commentary* was not appreciated at the *New Yorker* except for its clean copy, and that his film criticism seemed unknown to the staff there. He had an unsparing eye for a text, but took care never to confuse a person with his work. He was much kinder than I was about some of the rigidly Stalinist types we both had known on campuses. He had been with Arthur Miller at the University of Michigan and was more generous in appraising him than it was customary to do at the time, although his precisely discerning criticism of *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible* remains the most insightfully devastating we have.

Bob had long been having a problem, he thought, with his digestion. He had been hospitalized for a heart condition. One morning, I got a call at my home on Long Island from Midge Decter telling me that he had died of a heart attack during the night. I went to his funeral, numbed. A huge milling crowd had gathered at the Riverside Memorial Chapel, on Broadway. I sat through Marty's brief, choked eulogy and spoke to no one. (Marty and Bob had been at Michigan together.) I remember I said hello to Jason and Barbara Epstein on the sidewalk outside, then walked downtown. Years later I learned that the funeral had been an occasion in the New York intellectual and publishing worlds, memorialized eventually in a novel and movie. Lionel Trilling's moving and intimate essay about Bob, the introduction to Bob's posthumously published essays, *The Immediate Experience,* provides an extended impression of the kind of person Warshow was.

I met Norman Podhoretz for the first time when he was on leave from military service and poked his head into the office I was sharing with Marty Greenberg. He was in khaki uniform, that of a private, tie tucked into his shirt, belt buckle centered precisely in line with his shirt front and fly. His hair was cut short, and he struck me as tall and thin, perhaps because I remained seated and he stood in the doorway. I was startled to look up from my desk and see a replica of myself in the snapshots I had posed for in the Air Force almost exactly ten years earlier, even to the long nose and the lean face. Norman had already become our wunderkind contributor.

"My career in the service," I recall he was saying to Marty, "is only a continuation of high school and Columbia. I always get the highest scores on all the tests I take. My army classification scores were so high, I was assigned as a clerk to headquarters." We laughed.

After he left, I remarked to Marty

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about my *déjà vu* sense of seeing myself ten years back. I said that I had never exuded so much confidence, and I was pleased to see an image of me in uniform so exuberant, not to say cocky.

"It's the generation difference," Marty offered. "You and I lived through the Depression of the thirties. Norman didn't. His generation had things cleared away for them. They expect things to come much more readily today. There's a hell of a lot less doubt now."

A number of years later, after Marty himself held the editorship briefly, Norman came back as editor. He had served on the staff during Elliot's illness and was one of his strongest supports, I understand, in that very difficult time. I continued to write for *Commentary* a while from New Mexico, but I drifted more and more into reading and writing for purely academic journals and attending more and more strictly to a professorial career. Now and then I tried to bring something to my academic work of *Commentary*'s free-floating curiosity, its respect for all intellectual probing and rumination that transcended disciplinary boundaries, even that basic skepticism toward orthodoxy that one might have thought would be especially welcome on campuses, and each time the inordinate effort emphasized for me how ideally "academic" my period at *Commentary* indeed had been. □

ARS MEMORANDA

by John Nollson

Readers of the better literary journals know that although the novel is dead and poetry is *in extremis*, there is still one literary genre which remains strong and vital—the memorandum. Indeed, the creative achievement inherent in the modern memorandum has long been recognized. But now that the *New York Times* has announced the appointment of its first full-time memorandum critic, the status of the memorandum in the literary world is at long last, fully secure. In fact, it is not too soon to begin speaking of a post-modernist phase in memoranda-writing.

As we know, government has been functioning in these parts for nigh-unto four centuries and Americans have long struggled to find an authentic American voice that can sing through the prose—even in triplicate. But it has taken courage at every stage. The roots of that distinctive American style originate in the Great Awakening. This first breakthrough cannot be overemphasized. It was characteristic of European feudalism and solipsism to begin the memorandum with *from:* rather than *to:*—except in the Germanic states, where the memorandum began with *subject.* In his classic study *Democracy in America,* Alexis de Tocqueville remarked on the democratic reform of listing the recipient first. This was more than a stylistic innovation; it was an important precursor of the Declaration of Independence, which, itself, was originally drafted as a memorandum.

Yet, as one would expect, the American national style is rooted in a prior regionalism. Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, and Melville all sent memoranda to each other. In those days, the sender signed his full name and only gradually did the first stirrings of industrial transformation in Lowell lead to the more efficient practice of initialing. There was, on the other hand, a Southern approach that was rather different, and it found its ultimate expression in the preparations for that seminal anthology of Southern agrarianism, *I'll Take My Stand.* Papers recently discovered in the library of Vanderbilt University reveal that the project began with a memorandum from John Crowe Ransom to several of his colleagues:

> to: List
> *from:* JCR
> subject: need for position papers on modern life
>
> I have received a time-urgent request from our publisher suggesting that we get ourselves configured into a stand-taking mode. . . .

Ransom's memorandum was criticized by Ernest Hemingway for being too wordy, and Hemingway refused to participate.

> to: Jack
> from: Papa
> subject: experience
>
> Your memo caught up with me at Harry's. I can't write memos; I've got to live them. I've got to feel the salt spray as I try to land that 148 pp. memo I've hooked. It's the fight, not the form, that counts.

Fortunately, these fights among native-born memoranda writers were cooled by the arrival of a new group of writers, descendants, in the main, of East Europeans. By now, all of us are familiar with at least three generations of Jewish-American memoranda-writers. For this, we are indebted to Columbia University which has brought out an annotated, eleven-volume edition of representative memoranda from the archives of the New York City government, all works by Jewish-Americans. As the *Times* observed in a rare critical notice:

> The Columbia edition marks a milestone in our understanding of twentieth century literature. Here, within the seemingly narrow confines of the to-from format, there emerges not merely that traditional Jewish sense of irony and sensuality, but a larger appreciation of the tensions and ambiguities of post World War I culture. The famous Epstein memoranda, which became the basis for the reconstruction of the bath houses at Brighton Beach, is the American analogue of Weimar, the quest for sun and surf, so much the hallmark of the Lost Generation.

Similarly, we have gained new insights into the social transformations caused by the internal disruptions of World War II. For this, we are indebted to the United States Naval Academy for its 34-volume edition of the internal memoranda of the Office of Naval Logistics. In the blizzard of initials and numbers, we nonetheless perceive how a whole generation became accustomed to eating dry breakfast cereals, cornflakes especially. Indeed, one of the untold tales of the conflict was the organization of a vast armada of vessels, whose main function was the shipment of bananas from Central America to the European Theater of Operations—there to be sliced and placed atop the cornflakes.

We are now able to skip over the bloated and wasteful memoranda of the Great Society era and move directly to the dominant theme of contemporary Republican memoranda—deconstructionism. As everyone knows, the leading deconstructionist is David Stockman, who is prepared to deconstruct almost anything. Predictably, deconstructionism in government method has become embodied in the language of government itself. The trend is furthest advanced in the Foreign Ministry. Any hope for the reconstruction of the language now rests with the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

It is too soon to say whether this will be the hallmark of post-modernist memoranda. A whole new generation is on the scene, and the 51-year-old memoranda-writer cannot be compared to recent graduates of the better law schools, all in their mid-twenties. Whether they will be content to operate within the confines of the older forms remains to be seen. It is, in short, an exciting time. □

John Nollson's book, Washington in Pieces (*Doubleday*), *has been well received in Macon, Chattanooga, and Winston-Salem.*

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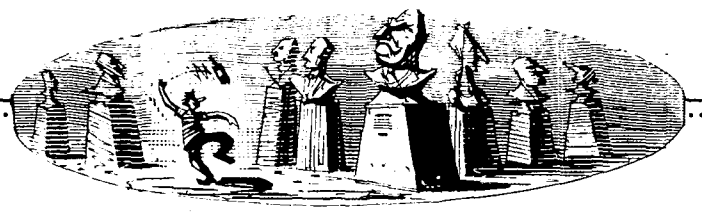


EMINENTOES

METAPHYSICAL CONCEITS

by Mitchell S. Ross

In June 1977, while passing through Paris, I found myself unable to engage in learned chitchat without being referred to the latest literary fashion which had swept through the city, and, indeed, all of France. There was constant talk of a new wave of French thinkers, dubbed *Les Nouveaux Philosophes,* who had overthrown the Marxian wisdom of Professor Louis Althusser and other luminaries that had guided them throughout the heady hours of May, 1968. In its place the new philosophers had taken up a rather gloomy sort of anti-Communism and were engaged in spreading their gospel around.

They were a sizable but fairly well-defined agglomeration, and two men had risen from the ranks to attain glamor and *gloire.* The first of these was André Glucksmann, whose punk haircut covered a head nearly middle-aged and filled with Teutonic intricacies. Glucksmann was the author of two major works of philosophical controversy, *The Cook and the Man-Eater* and *The Master Thinkers.* The first book constituted an unfavorable review of Soviet claims that mankind east of the Elbe lived closer to Utopia than their brothers in the West. *The Master Thinkers* balled out German philosophers for infecting the mind of man with fantasies of dominance. This edifying critique would have been sublime had it not been written in a barbarous style reminiscent of the work of Glucksmann's victims.

The second leader among *Les Nouveaux Philosophes* emerged in the spring of 1977. This was Bernard-Henri Lévy, whose book, *Barbarism with a Human Face,* became a French bestseller soon after its publication that season. Lévy was a philosopher with a human face, a very handsome one indeed, and his frequent appearances on French television screens did nothing to deter sales of his book. By June booksellers had sold enough copies of the thing to pay for a lifetime's worth of baguettes. The debate raged on. There were appreciations in *Le Figaro,* demurrals in *Le Monde,* denunciations of M. Lévy's virtue in the Red organ, *L'Humanité.* To a citizen of this great American Republic, in which serious thinkers tend to be stamped and then quarantined by the popular press as if they were carriers of communicable disease, it seemed a fascinating spectacle.

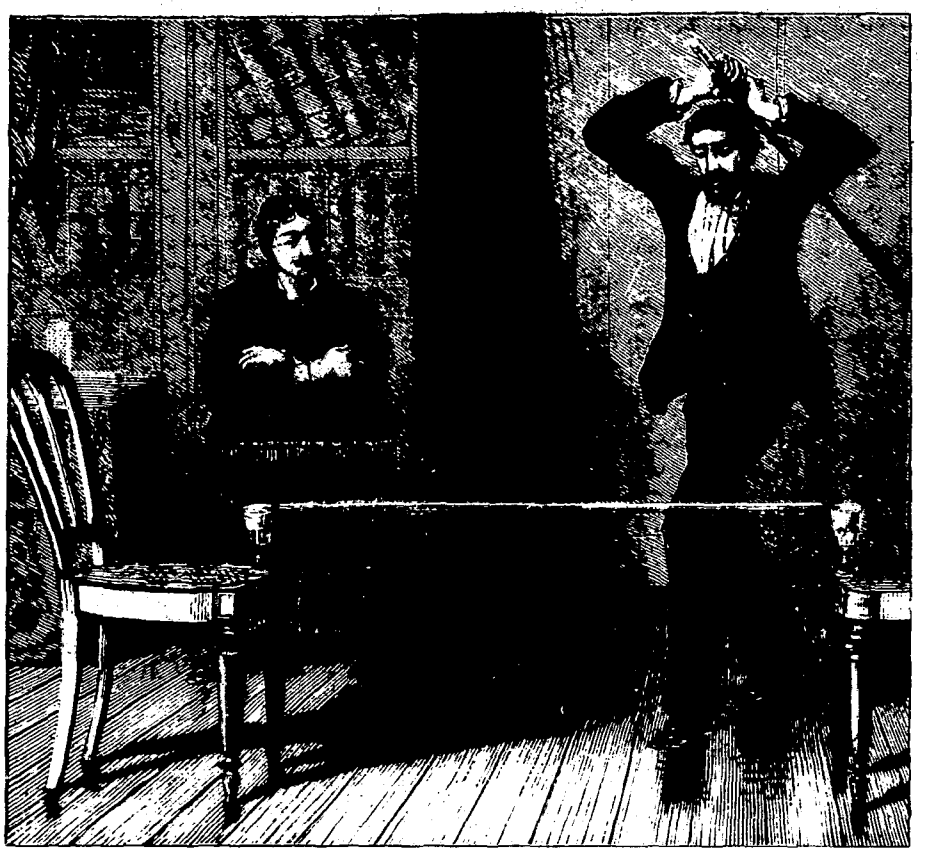
I advertised my fascination and was lucky enough to elicit the services of an American woman blessed with a touch of gall. She arranged for me to meet Lévy by informing his associates at the publishing firm of Grasset that I represented an important American periodical and had come to Paris for the purpose of investigating *Les Nouveaux Philosophes* firsthand. This was untrue but it worked.

Lévy invited me to lunch with him at his apartment the following Sunday. He told me to come at one, which I did, without having eaten breakfast. He met me at the door, conveying, in spite of the early afternoon hour, the impression of an awakening Adonis: half-dressed, skinny, and sleepy-eyed. The publicity sheets had identified the year of his birth as 1948. Had they not done so I would have assumed him to be a boy of sixteen. His face betrayed barely a whisker.

Lévy vaguely directed me to sit at a long wooden table in an otherwise empty room while he finished dressing. Then he disappeared into another room. I expected him to re-emerge bearing some kind of food or drink, but instead he carried nothing but a package of cigarettes when he returned and sat down across from me at the table. For the next two hours he smoked and we discussed his philosophy, employing his English (bad) and my French (very bad) to review the deplorable condition of modern man.* In the midst of our colloquy we were joined by a lovely young woman named Sylvie who assisted in translation but otherwise failed to improve upon the philosopher's standard of hospitality. Finally, feeling perhaps a little wiser and certainly much hungrier than when I had arrived, I took leave of Bernard and Sylvie.

A few days later I sorted out my notes and composed an article about Lévy which generously referred to the philosopher's ideas and omitted mention of his manners. A few months later it was published in an American journal of opinion and I was paid an honorarium of $150 for it. By that time I was far from France and so unable to invite Lévy over for a lunch of cigar smoke. Instead I summoned a friend, dug up a duckling, uncorked a bottle of champagne, and celebrated *Les Nouveaux Philosophes* in absentia. Thereupon I ceased thinking about Bernard-Henri Lévy.

*I recently saw Lévy on "Sixty Minutes" and it appeared that his English had greatly improved. My French, alas, has not.



When *Barbarism with a Human Face* was translated into English and published in this country in 1979 I paid no attention to it. Lévy could tell the world that he was "the bastard child of an unholy union between fascism and Stalinism." and Martin Peretz could declare the book "one of those rare works which changes the mind of an entire generation." What was it to me? I too well remembered its author as a man who had nearly starved me to think of him as someone who could change a generation's mind.

Time passed. I forgot Bernard as I am sure he forgot me. Then, in August of 1980, fate reunited us in a most unexpected way. In the pages of *Esquire* magazine a critic undertook to revile me, in company with the distinguished obituarist, R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. Our good works were thoroughly belittled. They were dismissed. They were unfavorably compared with works of . . . Bernard-Henri Lévy! Next to *le nouveau philosophe* and "the thorny knots of his neo-Nietzschean arguments" Ross and Tyrrell were seen as mere

Mitchell S. Ross is the author of The Literary Politicians *and* An Invitation to Our Times.

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"whippersnappers" who "carry no ideas, merely a quiverful of peeves and prejudices." Tyrrell took it well. He had never, after all, lunched at Lévy's. I was less sanguine. I determined that if Bernard-Henri Lévy was going to touch my life in unexpected ways I had best make myself thoroughly familiar with his thinking, thorny knots and all.

I turned back to *Barbarism with a Human Face*. Martin Peretz's whoop notwithstanding, the book failed to create a sensation in this Republic, but it did elicit criticism of a respectful and even admiring sort. All who approached Lévy from any position save deep left field were grateful to discover a young French intellectual who frankly doubted the moral superiority of the USSR to the USA.

Lévy was charming in a melancholy fashion. "I will soon be thirty and I have betrayed the dream of my youth at least a hundred times. Like everyone else, I believed in a new and joyful 'liberation'; now, without bitterness, I live in the shadows of my past hopes." He preferred Rousseau to Voltaire. He denounced "the reactionary idea of progress" and replaced it with poetic pessimism. He did not so much reject the Marxist notion of capital as he inverted the optimistic determinism that went with it: thus his strange declaration that capitalism is "the most formidable death machine that history has ever produced." He wouldn't have said this if he had thought harder before writing, but he was too much wedded to dialectical formulations of the *ancien régime* to avoid such silly orotundities. "Barbarism, I said, is capital and nothing but capital; it is capital exaggerated, exacerbated, and unlimited. We must also say that it is a decadent and *degenerate* capital." No, we must speak that way only if we have graduated from Marxism and are addressing ourselves to those still in school—Lévy's position precisely. The rest of us, grounded in the liberal political tradition, feel no such compulsion to create tortured syntheses.

Finally Lévy proclaimed his anti-credo:

> Of course I know that God has been dead since Nietzsche, but I believe in the virtues of an atheist spiritualism in the face of contemporary apathy and resignation—something like an austere libertinism for a time of catastrophe. I don't believe in man, either, and I am quite willing to agree with my worthy teachers that he is in the process of disappearing from the stage of thought; but I simply believe that without a certain idea of man the State soon surrenders to the whirlpool of fascism.

Mind and soul grew restless; before long, atheist spiritualism and austere libertinism failed to satisfy him. He found himself drawn to the faith of his fathers and sensed the stern majesty of the Mosaic law. Like others young enough to have escaped the Holocaust he discovered in his fellow Jews a symbol of human strength and endurance:

> a community of wandering but also of light and confidence which, carried by fate to the very limits of sorrow, never surrendered the simple pride of being human. Without ambiguity, I recognize myself in that community. Ardently, proudly, I choose to carry and exalt its colors.

He called his new book *The Testament of God*.† Traveling on the road to ethics he found it necessary to make several political stops. As in *Barbarism with a Human Face* these are of dubious value to those of us who have never tied red ribbons around our ideology. There is this: "the best constitution is the one that decrees that happiness is a totalitarian idea." A bit strong, no? Or: "there has never been *and* no doubt never will be any democracy except formal democracy, any concrete freedom except through respect for its abstract forms, any broadened democracy except an authoritarian and fascistic democracy." Fascistic democracy? The term makes no sense, except in the context of extremist eyewash. Yet Lévy feels that his customers need this sort of analysis. Likewise a statement such as the following: "Antifascism is a new idea, in the West and in the East. Modestly but firmly, I would like to take up that idea, that challenge." Well, antifascism is certainly not a new idea, but in Lévy's hands it is a new rhetorical trick. His purpose is to gather all the modern tyrannies—Brezhnev's USSR, Khomeini's Iran, Pinochet's Chile, et al.—under one roof. By labeling them all fascist he employs the accredited, opprobrious

†Harper & Row, $15.95.

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Afghanistan and the Strategy of Empire
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language of the Left. This may gain him new constituents, but it weakens the perception of what fascism really was, or is. And why call Vietnam "the most formidable colonial war in history"? Here again Lévy seems to be nursing old barricade wounds as he writes.

As a guide to democratic behavior, then, *The Testament of God* is useless for anyone who has never shed a tear at hearing the strains of the *Internationale*. When he endeavors to forge his Jewish identity Lévy is more interesting. The same writer who so casually tosses all tyrants into a fascist pot is eager to distinguish between Hitler's crimes against the Jews and violations of the rest of humanity: "To place [the Holocaust] on the same level as the murder of the Poles, the communists, or the 'asocial' is thus not only a moral outrage but an historical error, which neglects the capital difference between physical liquidation and the *metaphysical* hatred whose goal was to erase even the memory of the people of the Bible."

Why should he think there is a capital difference between physical liquidation and metaphysical hatred? Because his faith, his moral life, depends on it. "I can now confirm: I needed the memory of the monotheist function (or should I say fiction?), whose first and last words are perhaps to wrest the subject away from the burdensome weights of the world, of nature, and of the history it calls 'idolatry,' and I, in more modern terms, call 'barbarism.'" Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One:

> What I had in mind, throughout this journey, was a Number, simply a number, the number "One" of a monotheism whose testament knows neither the word nor the category "religion"; whose tradition has at least one singular characteristic, namely that, being refractory to any mysticism, it never ventured to establish an ontology, a cosmology, or a triumphal world-system; and whose effect in the world was thus perhaps nothing but a perpetual suspension of all adhesions to ontology in which men get lost, dissolve, and busy themselves. In a word, the "One" of a resistance.

There follows a highly personal reading of the Old Testament which evades, as do all such commentaries, the innumerable contradictions of the Book in favor of crafting a philosophical vision that suits Lévy's needs. I for one am not inclined to judge such exercises harshly. If the Devil and Billy Graham can quote Scripture for their purposes, then why not Bernard-Henri Lévy? This Biblical criticism is climaxed by the issuance of seven commandments for modern man: 1) The Law, your Law, is holier than the event, 2) It will always be the time, for you, to manifest the good, 3) You must in every instance assume that the future is not your concern, 4) You will undertake nothing that is not immediately worthy of being instantly and perpetually repeated, 5) You must assume and convince yourself that truth, your truth, is foreign to the order of politics, 6) Without a theory or a revolutionary party, you will practice resistance, 7) You must, in order to commit yourself, begin by detaching yourself. These commandments are exegetically woven together in a single chapter. They add up to a stern doctrine.

Living in a country in which such basically ludicrous creeds as Gaullism and Communism have won large and enthusiastic followings, Lévy is highly sensitive to the abuses of decency that have been committed in the name of liberty. But his thinking provides a bracing antidote for citizens of these States, too. Am I alone in feeling utterly unmoved by all claims that the lot of Western man can be seriously improved by any political or economic policy, whether in the form of social-welfare schemes or supply-side the-

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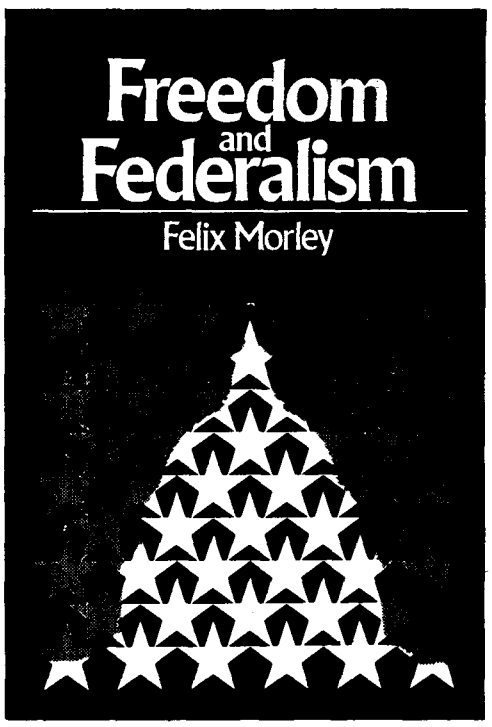

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ories? May I be permitted to doubt the notion of George Gilder that the spiritual qualities of capitalism have been insufficiently appreciated? Our civilization has in so many ways grown poorer with riches.

But if we approve of Lévy's austere attitude, must we also follow him into monotheism? This seems to me more a matter of temperament than of necessity. Skepticism, he thinks, too easily becomes an "alibi for surrender." The times are too tough for doubt. In the age of Gulag free men require the presence of God on their side. Perhaps he is right. I doubt it. There is really no way to judge these things in advance—which, by the way, is why it is unwise for philosophers to forget about lunch. □

THE TALKIES

THE GREAT EFFEMINIST

by John Podhoretz

Last month, it was widely reported that the results of a *People* magazine survey listed Alan Alda, the star of the television series "M*A*S*H," as the person "you would most like to have over at your house for dinner." Mr. Alda beat out President Reagan and Pope John Paul II, among others, to achieve this victory.

Now, *People* magazine polls on such subjects should not be taken with any less grains of salt than other, more reputable polls. Still, it is fascinating; what does Mr. Alda have that so endears him to America? Along with his weekly portrayal of the jokey, compassionate, and god-like Hawkeye Pierce, Mr. Alda is well known as a leading "male feminist," as a recent *New York Times* story described him. He was the star of the successful *Seduction of Joe Tynan,* which he wrote as well, and of the movie version of *Same Time Next Year*. He has won as many Emmy awards for writing and directing as for acting. He is often seen on the "Tonight" show, on Merv Griffin and Mike Douglas. He contributed a favorable blurb to Letty Cottin Pogrebin's *Growing Up Free*. He has an attractive, handsome face with a prominent nose and a wry, eloquent yet colloquial way of talking. These qualities obviously please some parts of the population; yet why has everyone in this country gone crazy for Alan Alda (who, incidentally, was presented to the nation as a young movie star fifteen years ago and was not all that well received)?

We can find some part of the answer in Alda's new movie, *The Four Seasons,* which he also wrote and directed. *The Four Seasons* is a smash hit, a surprise for the normally canny trade paper *Variety*, which had previewed the movie as: "Soggy comedy-drama; outlook doubtful." This assessment of the movie's financial possibilities is understandable, for *The Four Seasons* is exceedingly soggy—in fact, it fairly reeks with sentimentality, a new sort of sentimentality, in which truths are revealed to the characters every fifteen minutes or so through catharsis and love. It is filled to the brim with shots of leaves falling off trees, boats in the Caribbean, snow in Vermont, accompanied by a popularized arrangement of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" (my advice, by the way, is to head for the exit the next time you hear classical music emanating from the soundtrack of a Hollywood film). Three couples take vacations together; they talk incessantly about food and about one another, and hang on to their friendship for dear life. It is talky, talky, talky; the soliloquy, rather than the conversation, is this movie's mode of expression. It is rife with undistinguished and trite performances, Alda's included—only Carol Burnett comes across at all well. Its humor strives for sophistication, but the movie gets its biggest laughs from one of the crudest of all comic routines: people overhearing, and reacting to, the sounds of a man and a woman making love passionately within earshot.

Two movies made in the past year and dealing with much the same subject as *The Four Seasons—Loving Couples* and *A Change of Seasons*—bombed miserably; so why has the public suddenly warmed to the story of the mid-life crisis of tired middle-aged couples? Part of it must have to do with Alda's style as a writer; his lessons are pills sugar-coated by grainy photography and banter that only a worldly-wise eleven year old would very much appreciate. (For example, the character Alda plays constantly says "I think we should get to the bottom of this," which immediately signals to the audience that serious stuff is ahead; no need for them to be surprised.) Also, Alda parades around a pretty blond girl, often leaving her partly unclad (she is the new wife of one of the men), so that one can ogle while one is getting the message. And, finally, during those ubiquitous occasions when the message is being delivered some kind of slapstick routine invariably accompanies it—someone hilariously breaks an ankle, say, or falls into the water while being harangued. As a director, Alda is no less subtle: When he wishes to make his meaning clear, he generally cuts to a close-up of Carol Burnett's wise, warm countenance, as if to say, Trust this woman. Since everybody loves Carol Burnett, everybody is satisfied.

But none of this suffices as explanation. What makes this movie a hit is Alan Alda himself, however ineffective and obvious his performance may be. Despite the fact that Alda the writer-director perversely makes Alda the actor the villain of the piece (and make no mistake about it; the character Alda plays *is* Alan Alda, he sounds just like the Alan Alda of interviews and talk shows), still one look at his face brings hordes to a swoon.

Alda is such a success because he is a paradigmatic figure. He is the unthreatening, nice, thoughtful, and emasculated fellow that any Women's Libber would love to meet. He radiates inoffensiveness and an odd asexuality that makes him at least as attractive to men as to women; he looked ridiculous when called upon in *The Seduction of Joe Tynan* to demonstrate sexual passion for Meryl Streep, because Alan Alda kissing anyone except in friendship is unthinkable. (He kisses everyone, many times, in friendship in *The Four*

John Podhoretz is film critic of The American Spectator.

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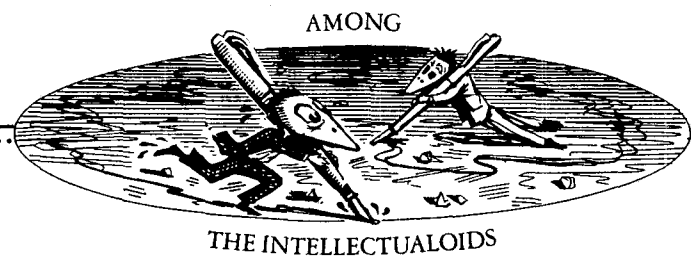
Seasons, which is probably why it is a bigger success than *Joe Tynan.*) He is an *example* to his audience of the perfect new American man; *he* does not think of women in terms of penis envy. In fact, Alda seems to be suffering from vagina envy: In a recent interview he said that he felt women to be more "sensitive" than men, and *The Four Seasons* is his tribute to womankind. The men in it—Alda, Jack Weston, Len Cariou—are all childish boors, while the women—Burnett, Rita Moreno, the intolerable Sandy Dennis, and Bess Armstrong, the pretty blonde—possess the wisdom of the ages. What a nice and pleasant vision: Women in the audience take comfort in their natural omniscience, men take comfort in the fact that they are told there is no need for them to be strong, in fact, they can be positively passive and succumb to the superiority of Woman.

What is truly amusing about the whole thing is that Alda is doing nothing new. In fact, as Robert Warshow so brilliantly demonstrated in his essay "The Anatomy of Falsehood," published in 1947, this was the viewpoint of those sexist Hollywood films of the 1940s. In discussing *The Best Years of Our Lives,* considered at the time the finest Hollywood movie ever made, Warshow captured the Hollywood ideal of male-female relations, as shown in the scenes between a young man who has just lost his hands as a sailor in World War II and his patient, understanding wife:

> For each of the main characters, there is a scene in which the woman he loves undresses him and puts him to bed. And when it is the sailor who is put to bed, the dream becomes almost explicit. . . . Every night, his wife will have to put him to bed, and then it will be her hands that must be used in making love. Beneath the pathos of the scene . . . one feels a current of excitement, in which the sailor's misfortune becomes a kind of wish-fulfillment, as one might actually dream it: he *must* be passive; therefore he can be passive without guilt.

It is fascinating, isn't it, that the dream of Hollywood Women's Liberation, as expressed by *The Four Seasons* and by the very person of Alan Alda, is the same dream of Hollywood's Unenlightenment. It is a dream of weakness; let the Other manage with the world, we await the undressing. □



VIRGIN MARTYRS

by Brenda L. Becker

"My father's funeral was full of priests," begins Mary Gordon's first novel, *Final Payments.*

"Felicitas Maria Taylor was called after the one virgin martyr whose name contained some hope for ordinary human happiness," begins her second one, *The Company of Women.*•

Ah, you may say, here it comes. Another Lapsed Literata has escaped the convent for the marketplace, there to hawk elegant self-portraits complete with stigmata induced by that Freudian demon, the Catholic Childhood.

Well, you would be right—and wrong. Miss Gordon's two books—both bestsellers—can indeed be read as familiar reverse-gear apologetics, Rent-a-Joyce sagas of guilt and liberation with a predictable dash of feminist rancor thrown in.

But, thanks to Miss Gordon's considerable, if uneven, talent, they are more than that. They are deft, thoughtful, often funny, and occasionally brilliant. This is not Maria Monk scribbling on the walls of the Women's Room, and I'm tempted to say "alas," because such unalloyed rubbish would be far less depressing to those of us still hanging on by the fingernails.

Both books present us with bright defector heroines from blue-collar Queens or Brooklyn who, after crippling bouts with the Outside World, return in uneasy reconciliation to the shell of the cathedral, where they apparently will dwell in anomie and the company of friends all the days of their lives. The Church is *not* portrayed in grisly stock footage, but in all its exasperating complexity—at once unbending and forgiving, logical and crazy, regal (at least in memory) and tacky.

Indeed, this concept of the tacky, and the impossibility of truth clothed therein, is central to Gordon's work, and possibly to that of anyone raised in Queens. "I cannot take seriously the spiritual life for anyone for whom 'the tacky' is not a lively concept," she once wrote in a smirky-but-serious piece on Marcel Lefebvre in *Harper's.*

But that is bluff. She takes it dead seriously, through two books nearly identical in theme and outcome. The sharpness of observation—on women with each other, on the homely domestic details of the Church before and after Vatican II—is relentless; she creeps with her camera eye in a moody slow pan over Gregorian chant and guitar-wielding nuns, hideous little Mass cards and Raphael Madonnas. It's all there—all except belief, and the cold at the center chills every cozy scene to a Gothic vignette.

The effect is not unlike watching an Ingmar Bergman movie shot in Archie Bunker land. We wince in painful recognition, and feel superior to our neighbors and former selves for having done so, but—we cannot live like this. We feel cheated at the fadeout when the lights go up, and the author knows it, and we know they know. Has Catholicism found its Woody Allen?

Not quite; I think I *like* Woody better. Woody's doppelgangers run afoul of their guilt and angst more or less at random, taking the silly and the somber with a wry agnostic bravado. Mary Gordon's, however, are set up meticulously for the kill, virgin martyrs on their way to some altar of the Zeitgeist. We are asked to contemplate their spiritual ashes with something like admiration, and that is where she loses me. She doesn't play fair; she's all but bribed fate to get them immolated.

In *Final Payments,* Gordon's acclaimed debut, we met Isabel Moore. At thirty, Isabel has lost the only vocation she knows—the daily care of her invalid father, a stern right-wing ascetic. At the opening salvos, I pricked up my ears:

> I gave up my life for him; only if you

•Random House, $12.95.

Brenda L. Becker is contributing editor to Travel/Holiday.

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understand my father will you understand that I make that statement not with self-pity but with extreme pride. He had a stroke when I was nineteen; I nursed him until he died eleven years later. This strikes everyone in our decade as unusual, barbarous, cruel. To me, it was not only inevitable but natural.

Great stuff so far, an authentic voice saying things that nobody else is saying—gritty and unfashionable things. But wait—then drops the other shoe, in the Mary Gordon Martyrdom Two-Step:

The Church exists and has endured for this, not only to preserve itself but to keep certain scenes intact: My father and me living by ourselves in a one-family house in Queens. My decision at nineteen to care for my father in his illness. We were rare in our situation but not unique. It could happen again.

Heavens, you mean like the Holocaust?

This double-barreled technique is sustained throughout the novel—martyr without a cause. It is novelists like Miss Gordon, not the Church, who exist to keep certain scenes intact: the discovery of poor sex-starved Isabel in bed with her first boyfriend that literally gives her father a stroke; Isabel's first voyage in years into dangerous, metaphoric Manhattan for a spree at Bloomingdale's; her humiliating affair with a repulsive married Catholic and her redeeming joyous one with a kindly married Protestant.

But then things take a turn for the bizarre. Kindly Protestant's gorgon of a wife descends on Isabel:

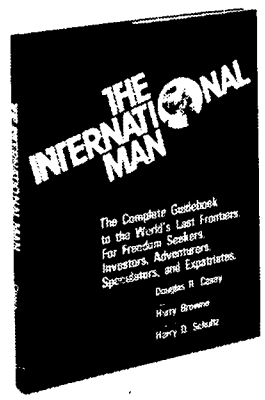
"I know all about girls like you . . . Catholic girls with holy pictures of virgin martyrs. They make perverts out of you, don't they? . . . You couldn't wait for your father to die so you could get a man between your legs. There's something very wrong with you. There's something disgusting and unhealthy. People like you aren't fit for normal life." I was sinking lower and lower. She was perfectly right about me; I could see that.

I quote this unlikely tirade at length to illustrate what I mean about Gordon's heavy-handed talent for manipulation. Of course we all know Isabel will now go, like the Swan Queen under Von Rothbart's evil spell, to atone for trying to enter the happy world of mortals. The purgative she chooses is life with Margaret Casey, the loathesome housekeeper whom Isabel ousted years ago from her widowed father's turf. She submerges herself, as the novel grows shriller and more harrowing, in the woman's squalid, pious milieu—gaining weight, getting an ugly haircut, and generally punishing her exquisite, treacherous sensibilities with a hair shirt of polyester.

Finally, after pondering inevitable death on Good Friday (such ponderings on Easter Sunday would be trickier to render in this ghastly light) she responds to an offer of rescue—not from wholesome lover or her two steadfast female friends but, in a typical confounding fillip of Gordon complexity, from the lovingly drawn, boozy parish priest Father Mulcahy. The Fifth Commandment, he tells her, covers slow deaths too. Isabel tells off Margaret (and leaves her her life savings as the price of freedom), goes on a diet, and drives away with her friends, back to the world of love and loss and Bloomingdale's. Belief is not regained, but "life" is chosen over its alternative.

No wonder Mary Gordon's second novel was so eagerly awaited—where could she go from there? The answer, in *The Company of Women,* would appear to be: home again, Kathleen. It's like seeing a cycle of O'Neill plays done by the same rep company. This novel is lighter in tone and less bitter, but without the driving force of *Final Payments.* Possibly, this is because it is even sillier.

Here again is a wilted flower of Catholic girlhood just aching for defloration at the hands of modernity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(with, I might add, so little guilt—even the reflexive, vestigial kind—that Miss Gordon surely lost credibility points with fellow insiders). Felicitas, raised by her widowed mother, is described as a sort of "spiritual prodigy," the repository of hope for her mother's widowed or virginal friends (the company of the title) and for Father Cyprian, their spiritual advisor and reactionary male authority figure. Felicitas loses her faith in her enlightened teens and secretly works for the peace movement (as did Isabel), forsakes a small Catholic college to go to Columbia, and promptly falls with a thud for her professor of Modern Political Theory. Our trust in the narrator falls with her.

Even the standard cadre of critics, who are as solicitous of Miss Gordon as they would be of a just-cured paralytic, have grimaced and pointed out in unison that non-celibate males are Gordon's weak spot, and that *this* turkey is no character at all, but a caricatured grotesque of the sixties. He lives in a semi-commune with two other women, a child named Mao, and three dogs named Ho, Che, and Jesus, and says things like, "God, how I wish I'd been born Third World." Felicitas itches to tell him that a majority of the world's population would have loved to have been born *him*. "But she kept silent. She did not want to ruin what was going to be the most important experience of her life with her sharp, terrible tongue." And another virgin martyr bites the dust.

Even Isabel Moore would have sneered, I think, at this groveling lamb being led to the slaughter. The professor of desire suggests that she sleep with the guy downstairs for variety, then dumps her. Pregnant, she drops out of school, flees an illegal abortion clinic in last-minute panic (at physical, not spiritual, peril—a feminist sign of the cross at the expense of honesty).

Eventually, with much nudging about immaculate conception, Felicitas returns to the welcoming arms of her childhood's vestal virgins, and the unexpected forgiveness of embittered, Lefebvre-like Father Cyprian, to bear her daughter. She names her Linda ("I asked the nurse what name had been given to girl children most often that year"), and decides to marry the owner of the local village hardware store ("Leo's movements are slow, and I'm not sure he isn't stupid"). "And I go on," the book ends, "the daughter of my mother, the mother of my daughter, caretaker of the property, soon to be a man's wife. My life is isolated, difficult and formal. It is, perhaps, not the life I would have chosen, but it is a serious life. I do less harm than good." *Final Payments* was upbeat by comparison.

What are the messages here? One is the feminist dirge that men, self, God, and Happiness don't work in any combination. But another, wrote Wilfred Sheed (himself reigning wizard in this niche) in his review of *Final Payments,* is that "if you are an ex-believer, you don't have to go away mad."

Now, that is bosh. Of *course* you have to go away mad—angry-mad or crazy-mad, either is a dignified response—or else go away comatose, which is the cheerful option we're given here. A lifelong metaphysical shell game, after all, is a somewhat bigger swindle than Santa Claus; the Christian framework, emptied of conviction, is not a kind ethical retreat for battered women, but a monstrous, lying fraud.

And that is precisely where Mary Gordon cheats, skating glibly over the heart of the matter ("God will have to meet me on the high ground of reason, and there he is a poor contender"). The figure of a personal Christ, the stumbling stone to this primal lament, is oddly absent amid all the sighing for "cool light

Battling the Paper Pile

In the fight on forms, last April 1 was no April Fool's Day. It was the effective date of a new law intended to turn back, or at least slow down, the mounting tide of government-required paperwork that's engulfing us all.

The Paperwork Reduction Act, it's called—a bipartisan piece of legislation shepherded through Congress by a coalition of Democrats and Republicans, signed into law by President Carter, and now being implemented by the Reagan Administration.

The paperwork burdens heaped on the public by the government are dizzying. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), enforcer of the new law, reports that federal agencies subject to the budget process thrust a paperwork load on the public totaling more than 1.2 billion work hours in fiscal 1980. The agencies had projected an increase in fiscal 1981. But OMB stepped in to cut the figure by 48 million hours.

Even so, the paperwork saddling the public this year adds up to 590,000 work years. That equals or surpasses the work years for the entire steel industry, or the entire newspaper and magazine industry.

Some 75% of the paperwork dictated by the government is mandatory. Penalties may be assessed on people who don't comply. Tax reporting is an example. Another 19% of the paperwork is required to get or keep a federal benefit, such as a Medicare payment or a research grant. Only 6% is voluntary.

The time and money spent filling out forms for the government are time and money that are unavailable for other, more productive purposes. For businesses, the dollars spent on government paperwork are funds that cannot be invested, say, in research and development. For hospitals, they're dollars shut off from use in health care services or medical research. For state and local governments, they're dollars unavailable for social services—or, for that matter, dollars that could be turned back to the people in reduced taxes.

There's a tendency in the bureaucratic burrows to view the piling up of paper as an end in itself. OMB is at war with that notion. It is establishing a federal information locator system. The aim is to get government agencies to knock off making demands on the public for information that already exists in Uncle Sam's vast apparatus.

Under terms of the new law, OMB is going to make government agencies come up with a " paperwork burden estimate " whenever they want information from the public. This will require an agency to detail the time and cost to the public of supplying the information, justify why it is needed, and tell how it will be used.

Come the first of next year, any government request for information must carry an OMB "control number." If there's no such number, you can ignore the request. Just toss it in the wastebasket.

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refreshed by water," "a fine, dull whiteness of absolute quality," "the thin, transparent God that barely left a shadow."

Well, *I* certainly went away mad—both from Miss Gordon's clever and well-meaning books and, more pointedly, from the critical reception accorded them. Early on in his seduction by Christianity, G. K. Chesterton confessed that "it did for one wild moment cross my mind that perhaps those might not be the very best judges of the relation of religion to happiness who, by their own account, had neither one nor the other." Miss Gordon, if her heroines are as close to her heart as they seem to be, would seem to have problems on both counts. But G.K.'s doubt has not much troubled the mind of, say, Miss Francine du Plessix Gray, who proclaimed Gordon "her generation's preeminent novelist of Roman Catholic mores and manners." Sheed again: "In the European manner, the Church is seen not as a good place or a bad place . . . but as a multilayered poem or vision which dominates your life equally whether you believe it or not; which doesn't even seem to need your belief once it has made its point."

The Church a "multilayered poem" in the *New York Review of Books*? It is quite possible that we who remain are witnessing the unthinkable: We are being rendered innocuous. The intellectual world, having witnessed close to two anaemic decades since our Council frolics, may have relaxed at last, and let us exchange our Father Fang persona for that of just another, if slightly weirder, ethnic backdrop. Is a *Final Payments* TV movie with Jill Clayburgh next?

That is why, when I praised the keenness of both books, I almost said "alas." Forgive me for a bit of Gordonesque melodrama. But I feel (and I'm not quite alone, not yet) towards the living core of Catholic doctrine the way the Italian surgeons must have felt who, a few hours ago as I write this, struggled over the bleeding Pope: This is special. Even here, rendered weak and ordinary and even ridiculous, I dare to assert that this is special, that this thing is better and more crucial than other things for some hidden and all-explanatory reason.

That is why those who have "outgrown" the Church and would recall it with sage nostalgia rile me more than the slanderers. They are, again, like Chesterton's "candid friend" who says "I am sorry to say we are ruined"—and is not sorry at all. "He may be said, without rhetoric, to be a traitor; for he is using that ugly knowledge which was allowed him to strengthen the army, to discourage people from joining it."

For, of course, there is no other army. (Miss Gordon would seem to admit this, by her half-hearted comment in an interview that only feminism could come close to the lost "resonance" of Rome.) The nitty-gritty, stripped of Mass cards and sex and the rest of it, is not a choice between marching in two different directions, but between marching and running in circles.

And just let anyone grappling with the impossibility of young Catholic womanhood dare to suggest that "that's easy for you to say." It's most difficult to say, and even harder to do, and here I fear I must get personal.

Miss Gordon—hell, Mary—and I grew up within miles of each other. We attended the same high school within five years of each other, although we never overlapped. We both crossed the East River to secular Behemoth U.'s, where she—uh, Felicitas—and I both sighed over cool

Mitchell S. Ross

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worldling professors, children of their decades. (Hers gave her Marx to read; mine lent me *The Culture of Narcissism* after underlining the parts that referred to himself.) We have both ferociously loved—and been loved by—orthodox parents too good and intelligent to deserve rebellion.

We know that we and our dilemmas are like the last numbers of a lithograph, like dinosaurs, like Ashley Wilkes; they have literally made us and thrown away the mold, sometime between 1962 and now. I could kiss her for writing things like this:

> She [one of Felicitas' mother's friends] had no real friends among the people that she worked with, for she feared their incomprehension. She feared passing that point of intimacy after which someone would feel free to say, "I hope you don't mind my asking, but what is it with you?" Her virginity no one would believe; they preferred to think of her as having cleverly hidden something unspeakable, some practice that would shock even the most casual of them.

Now, had Mary and I gone to the Mary Louis Academy (yes, it's called that) at the same time, I have no doubt whatever that we would have been friends, friends of the gut profundity she knows so well. We would have rolled with glee at tacky old nuns, tackier new nuns, twit ingenues, and beefy boys from Bishop Molloy High. Over the years, we would watch alumna turn into lawyers, mothers, lesbians, addicts, architects, Mormons, occasionally nuns, and would go on loving them; we would start having long, lucid arguments, and at the end of each would find ourselves a little further apart. I will wind up, I would tell her, at Quixote odds with the world but at home in the cosmos; you will wind up in detenté with the world and at odds with the void. We would both laugh at our pomposity, we smug daughters of Queens; and she would go on to be the novelist, I the journalist. For who wants a novelist who really believes in happy endings? □

LONDON'S RIOTS

by Colin Welch

We often speak of the blacks as being in various ways "deprived." Well of one thing they certainly are deprived: and that is of the sort of candid criticism and advice which all the rest of us get from time to time. It may make us cross for a bit. But on reflection we digest it and often greatly profit from it.

We have all of us behaved appallingly at times. And most of us can say without humbug that we are sincerely grateful to those who without spite or ill-nature pointed it out to us.

Certainly the blacks are not deprived of coarse abuse and horrible insults, scrawled on walls or expressed in foul language or appearing even in print in racist rags. No one expects the blacks to profit from this sort of thing. Every decent person understands and to some extent shares the bitter resentment they must feel. And this sympathy is surely one of the factors which stops us from uttering even the most good-natured criticism and advice. We don't want to get mixed up with the thugs who daub "Wogs Go Home" on lavatory walls. Yet really something ought to be said, and that for the blacks' own good.

For a start, the blacks are said to live in "fear" of the police. Well, they or some of them certainly have an odd way of showing it. It is surely not normal to injure 149 policemen or to shove battering rams into their stomachs if you are absolutely terrified of them.

Jews living in German-occupied territory, now they really did live in fear. Most of them showed it not by brutal violence and riot and looting, or by attacking the Gestapo with telegraph poles but by that awed, apprehensive, and shrinking quietness which is the usual mark of real fear.

I don't doubt that some blacks really are frightened, and these must include the most decent, sensible, and law-abiding of them. They must be really frightened not only by the riots, which endanger their lives and property just like everyone else's and which give all blacks a thoroughly bad and largely undeserved name.

They must also be frightened of the way in which all their soapy pseudo-friends, social workers, clergymen, and self-appointed, self-advancing "spokesmen" leap forth to claim the riots are justified by grievances (which they cannot be) and urge that these grievances be removed by all sorts of those special favors, privileges, and immunities, which wise people always refuse as they would refuse poisoned chocolate. These decent blacks must fear that all this special pleading will in time produce a nasty reaction—and it could.

Mr. Rudy Narayan, a prominent "spokesman," has been "in touch" with the Deputy Assistant Commissioner at Brixton police station. "I saw him on Monday night and asked for his co-operation in generally cooling things down. As a result there was a de-escalation of the trouble."

If I were a black I would find this patronizing tone appallingly embarrassing, not least because of Mr. Narayan's implicit assumption that, if the police were not entirely to blame, then both police and rioters are alike troublemakers, rival ganga so to speak, Montagues and Capulets, and he, Mr. Narayan, the impartial godlike peacemaker, the dusky Prince of Verona. Blacks who are genuinely frightened should beg Mr. Narayan if not to get lost, then at least to de-escalate and cool himself down.

Again, blacks are said to riot because they are badly educated and unemployed. Could anything be more absurd? It is like hay for faintness. "There's nothing like eating hay when you're faint," said the White King. Alice demurred, and the king replied: "I didn't say there was nothing *better;* I said there was nothing *like* it."

The State offers to all, to black and white alike, an arguable appalling education. Very well: What is to be

Colin Welch is Editor-in-Chief of Chief Executive *and former deputy editor of the London* Daily Telegraph *from which this article is reprinted.*

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done about that? The answer may lie in political action for better schools or in parents educating their own children or finding teachers for them, or in children encouraged by their parents educating themselves, in reading, in a respect for and determination to acquire knowledge, skills, and wisdom. Alas, it certainly doesn't lie in riots, exciting as these may be.

Millions of us, moreover, black and white alike, are and have been unemployed without riots. Is this in some way to our discredit, suggesting us to be spiritless and spineless? Of course not.

For whoever is black and unemployed and genuinely wants a job (of how many young blacks in Brixton is this true?), there are various obvious don'ts. Don't get yourself up to look ferocious, outlandish, and threatening; don't spout modish hatred for police, for society and the system; don't take any notice of black or other windbags whose livelihood and prominence depend on fomenting racial discord and who are thus, as Roy Kerridge has pointed out in the (London) *Spectator,* your worst enemies; don't shamelessly break the law; don't vote for any party which, by raising the rates sky-high, will drive most employers in despair out of your area; don't smash the windows and loot the property of whatever few employers still remain; don't reduce your district to stinking ruins; do nothing calculated to increase whatever prejudice fair or unfair there may be against you; indeed, do the exact opposite.

It really is quite absurd to protest by violence and disorder against a general belief that you are prone to violence and disorder, to protest against bad housing by smashing up houses, to protest against unemployment by means which ruin employers and make you unemployable, to protest against being unloved by rendering yourself unlovable.

A lot of people seem to have got the cart before the horse. The root causes of violence in Brixton and like places are said to lie in bad education, bad housing, and unemployment. Thus only when all these ills are redressed will order be restored. This view, if not entirely wrong about the causes, surely obscures the cure, if there is one. This is that order must first be restored and thereafter firmly maintained. Only where order prevails in schools, in families, and on the streets, only where violence and disorder are immediately checked and appropriately punished, only there will be found jobs and prosperity and happy well-kept homes.

If forced to choose between disorder and injustice, Goethe preferred injustice. A harsh saying? Not when you think of it: For what is disorder but universal injustice, unjust not only to its victims but also to those who have created it, and who are tempted into evil courses they would not otherwise have dreamed of. Disorder engenders beasts and monsters and—don't misunderstand me—white beasts as well as black, skinhead as well as Afro monsters.

I don't doubt that the vast majority of blacks are decent, friendly, quiet, and law-abiding citizens. Certainly most of the ones I bump into are often movingly so. Isn't it time then that these decent ones in their own interest disciplined their unruly young and knocked into their heads the idea that, if the police and society have some duty to understand and sympathize with them, then they also have a complementary duty to understand and sympathize with the society they live in and with the police who have to protect it—yes, by rough and ready means if needed?

Otherwise the vicious circle of cause and effect will produce vaster conflagrations from which evil men will profit even more. □

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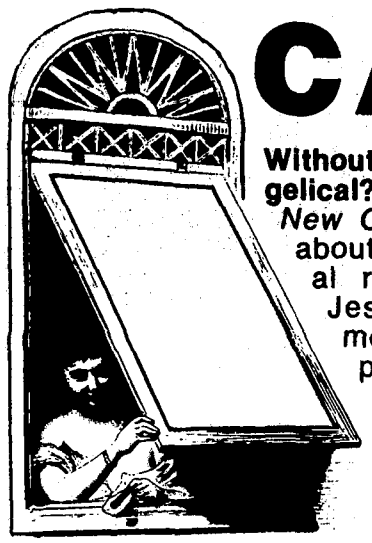

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE PRESTIGE PRESS AND THE CHRISTMAS BOMBING, 1972: IMAGES AND REALITY IN VIETNAM

Martin F. Herz, assisted by Leslie Rider
Ethics and Public Policy Center / $5.00

Peter W. Rodman

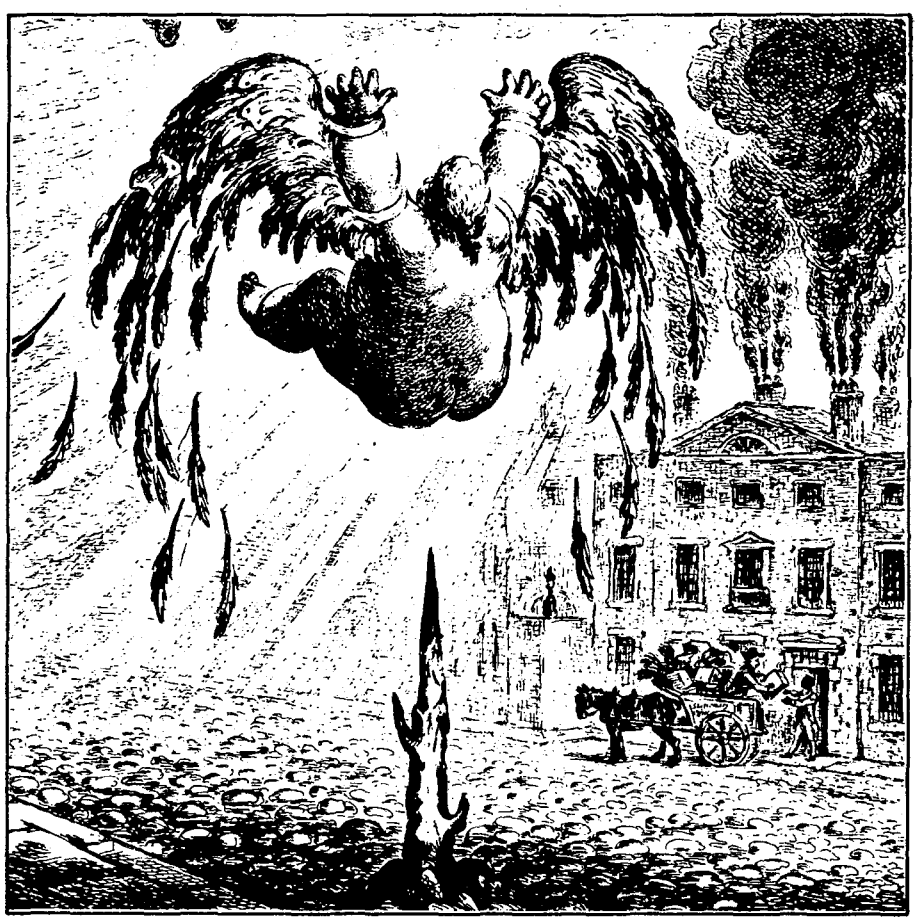
Not long ago, a friend of mine teaching at a well-known northeastern university was discussing Vietnam with a group of freshmen and referred to the Christmas bombing. One of the students asked an amazing question: "What was the Christmas bombing?"—amazing because it betrayed not so much the freshman's ignorance as his age. For a new generation is indeed emerging that has no personal memory of these events. They might as well have been discussing the Treaty of Versailles.

Frankly I find this hopeful. The next generation of Americans may yet be able to consider the Vietnam war with some semblance of objectivity, with minds unpoisoned by the passions, the peer pressure radicalism, or the journalistic distortions of the period. And if much of the junior faculty is still, as it undoubtedly is, the entrenched remnant of the 1960s *enragés,* perhaps the exuberant skepticism of youth will find even their smug antiwar orthodoxy a natural and juicy target.

But make no mistake about it, the battle for the minds of the young has already begun in earnest. At the end of April the *New York Times Book Review* informed us of two new brief histories of the Vietnam war written for teenagers. The reviewer chastised one of them for being insufficiently explicit about the lies, deceptions, atrocities, and general criminality of the United States government. The other book he praised. One can imagine what it must be like.

Fortunately there is a growing library of scholarly work of a more balanced character, interested not in waging ideological warfare but in pursuing historical truth. A few years ago, journalist Peter Braestrup, in *Big Story,* did a monumental study of how the American press and television reported and interpreted the Tet offensive of 1968; he overwhelmed skeptics with two volumes of irrefutable evidence that media coverage of the event was a distortion of reality. Guenter Lewy, in *America in Vietnam,* has done a meticulous analysis of the military conduct of the war, critical in many respects, but in the process knocking down canards about American war crimes and atrocities. Now comes a first-rate book answering the puzzled freshman's question: What was the Christmas bombing? The author is Martin F. Herz, a distinguished former ambassador who is now director of studies at Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy. His answer may be even more illuminating to many who remember the period, because most of the news coverage of the time—as the book shows—bore little resemblance to what really happened.

On October 26, 1972, North Vietnam and the United States both acknowledged publicly for the first time that they were close to an agreement on a cease-fire, release of prisoners of war, and American withdrawal; Henry Kissinger declared (a bit prematurely) that peace was "at hand." Negotiations resumed in November, settling many remaining issues, but ran aground in mid-December. After several days of frustration, the United States concluded that Hanoi had made a strategic decision not to complete the agreement. The impatient new Congress convening in January could be expected to force the United States out of the war on terms far worse than those embodied in the stonewalled agreement. Richard Nixon thereupon lifted restrictions on the bombing of North Vietnam, and for twelve days, from December 18 to 29, 1972, U.S. B-52s and fighter-bombers assaulted military targets in and around Hanoi and Haiphong. At the same time, General Alexander Haig visited Saigon to bring around our South Vietnamese ally, who was also balking at the cease-fire. Kissinger's negotiations with Le Duc Tho resumed in early January and quickly resulted in a completed agreement.



The bombing clearly caught the American public by surprise, and was perhaps as much of a shock at home as in Hanoi. The antiwar movement, up to that point demoralized by George McGovern's defeat and disarmed by Nixon's apparent near-achievement of peace, erupted in a cathartic last orgy of vicious attacks on Nixon's Vietnam policy. The United States was accused of indiscriminate carpet-bombing of civilian populations. Analogies with the four-day fire-bombing of Dresden were common; Hiroshima was called to mind. "Terror Bombing in the Name of Peace," howled the *Washington Post;* "Shame on Earth," lamented Tom Wicker in the *New York Times.* Editorials predicted that the bombing would only harden the hearts of the North Vietnamese and make a negotiated settlement impossible. And Nixon was much berated for callously remaining silent throughout the period, never fully explaining to the American public what was happening and why.

Ambassador Herz and his research assistant Leslie Rider have collected the available evidence on the bombing, its background, and its effects. And, methodically and at length, they have examined and analyzed the contemporary news coverage by five leading "prestige" news organizations: the *New York Times,* the *Washington Post, Time, Newsweek,* and the CBS-TV "Evening News." They found the media treatment to be unbalanced, misleading, and emotional in its revulsion at the bombing—not only in editorial columns but in one-sided news reportage, not only in light of what is known now but in terms of information available then. Charges of U.S. responsibility for the breakdown of the talks, of reckless use of B-52s, of massive civilian damage, of unanimous foreign criticism, of the futility of bombing as an instrument of pressure—these themes dominated the reporting. Much less space was given to the contrary evidence and opinion which demonstrably existed: "The

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Peter W. Rodman is a former member of the National Security Council staff.

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news was largely generated by opponents, and the U.S. prestige media copiously reported as news (with full attribution) the propaganda given out by the enemy and his allies."

The charges of gross urban destruction and massive civilian casualties were belied by Hanoi's own published casualty figures—about 1,300 over twelve days, which, as the *Economist* later pointed out, was the same number of civilians killed earlier in the year by *deliberate* North Vietnamese artillery fire on a refugee column fleeing Quang Tri in South Vietnam. (Deaths at Dresden and Hiroshima numbered in the hundreds of thousands.) Other journalists who visited Hanoi soon afterwards reported, to their credit, that civilian destruction was minimal and clearly not deliberate. Hanoi's population had already been largely evacuated months earlier; the new U.S. "smart bombs" had effectively zeroed in on military targets. The claim that Hanoi would never negotiate under pressure was disproved by events when, almost immediately, the talks resumed. Herz considers it likely (though not conclusively provable) that the Christmas bombing brought North Vietnam back to the conference table. This, of course, was exactly what the U.S. government had intended.

Herz is highly critical, however, of the Nixon administration's failure to explain its case to the American public. Kissinger had described the breakdown of the negotiations in a news conference two days before the bombing began, but the administration's subsequent aloof silence left the field to its ideological opponents and is thus partly responsible for the one-sidedness of the press treatment. It does not excuse the prestige media; Herz shows that, with few exceptions, they made little effort to present a balanced picture and in fact tailored their news reportage to their editorial position. The administration seems to have been resigned to constant vilification at this stage of the war, and hoped to be vindicated by the outcome. Nevertheless Herz makes a valid point—really a moral point—that a government owes its people an effort to explain an unpopular action, and to keep on presenting its reasons and arguments even in the face of seemingly endless and hysterical criticism. Otherwise the public discourse of a democracy is inevitably dragged down to the level of the most demagogic.

Herz and Rider deserve enormous credit for a fair-minded book that documents its conclusions and is honest in its judgments. It is an essential addition to the growing body of research on the Vietnam war. The nation's hope of having an undistorted historical memory will depend on such contributions. □

THE WORLD CHALLENGE

Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber / Simon and Schuster / $14.95

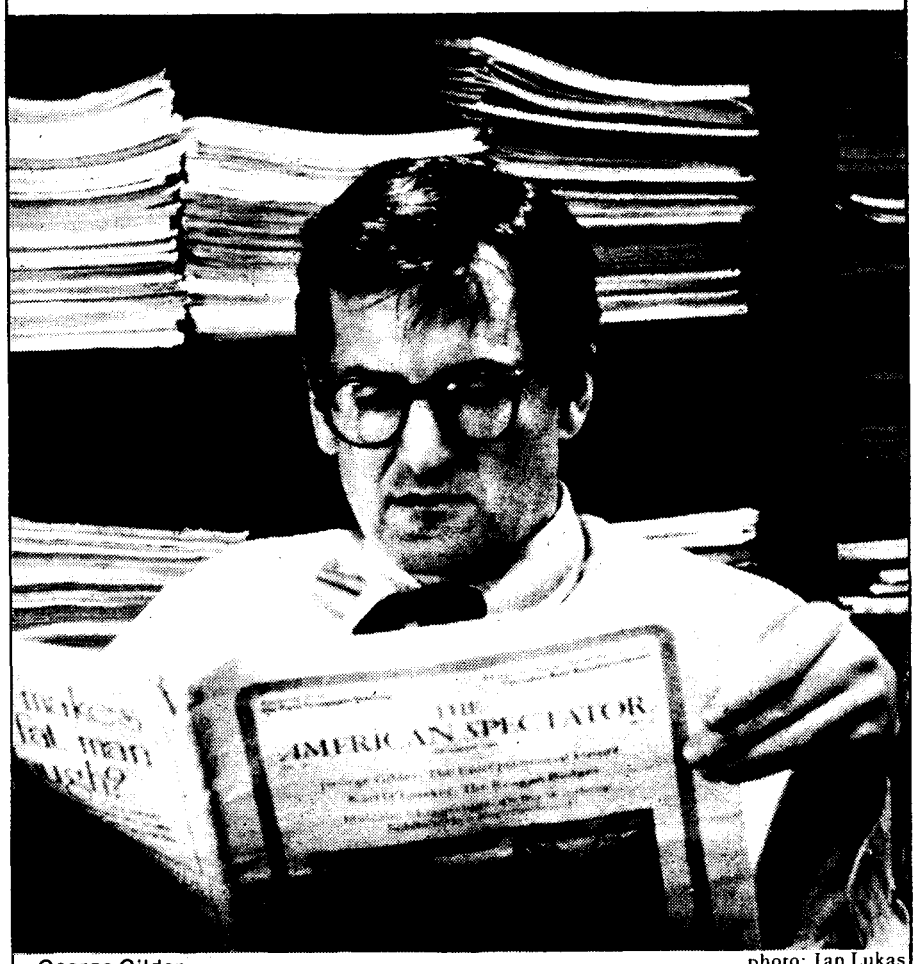
Mark Lilla

The Atlantic seldom seems so wide as when we read the French on politics. No matter if we happen to share the author's view or come to be persuaded by certain arguments he makes, there always seems to be something about the level of generalization and self-confidence of tone that irritates American and British political pragmatism. This is not because French political discourse is utopian and ours never is; we have our share of Packards and Tofflers too. It is just that the architects of American utopianism seldom rise above the vision of Jane Jacobs, and the French seldom descend below that of le Corbusier.

It is not surprising, then, that Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber's *The World Challenge* has generated so much interest and debate in his native France. In 1968, Servan-Schreiber announced *The American Challenge,* warning that unless Europeans adopted the modern management techniques, industrial organization, and structure of specialized higher education he found in the United States, they would see their major companies transformed into branches of American multinationals, and their nations into third-rate in-

Mark Lilla is managing editor of the Public Interest.

Who reads The American Spectator?



George Gilder. photo: Jan Lukas

ALSO: Ronald Reagan, Malcolm Muggeridge, Ben Wattenberg, Peregrine Worsthorne, S.I. Hayakawa, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Henry Kissinger, Clayton Fritchey, Milton Friedman, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Midge Decter, James Q. Wilson, Woody Allen, Joseph Coors, Irving Kristol, Henry Fairlie, Alan Abelson, Charlton Heston, Senator Jake Garn, Gertrude Himmelfarb, James Hitchcock, Gen. Alexander Haig, Tom Wolfe, James Jackson Kilpatrick, Bill Bruce, Jack Paar, Donald H. Rumsfeld, George Will, J. Peter Grace, Maj. Gen. George S. Patton III, Fred Iklé, Philip Crane, George W. Ball, Tom Stoppard, William F. Buckley, Jr., Patrick Buchanan, Albert Shanker, Lewis Lapham, Rowland Evans, Robert Novak, Jude Wanniski, Jack Kemp, William Rusher, Richard M. Nixon, William E. Simon, Malcolm S. Forbes, Jr., Frank Shakespeare, Norman Mailer, Clare Boothe Luce, Gerald R. Ford, Melvin Lasky, Nelson Polsby, Roger Milliken, Randolph Richardson, Thomas Sowell, Sidney Hook, Jim Fallows, Edith Efron, Gen. A.C. Wedemeyer, James L. Buckley, Elliott Abrams, Lewis Lehrman, William Randolph Hearst, Jr., Shmuel Moyal, Huntington Cairns, Eric Hoffer, Anne Armstrong, Norman Podhoretz, Jeff MacNelly, Doris Grumbach, Ernest van den Haag, Paul McCracken, Brock Yates, Ray Price, James Wechsler, John Roche, John Chamberlain, William Safire, Neal Kozodoy, Henry Salvatori, David Meiselman, Martin Peretz, Charles Horner, Edward Banfield, Victor Lasky, Raymond Aron, Roy Cohn, Joseph Hazan, Eugene V. Rostow, Michael Novak, Richard Perle, Hugh Kenner, George W. Ball, William Proxmire, Patrick Cosgrave, Jean-François Revel, Luigi Barzini, Tom Charles Huston, Clay La Force, Fred Silverman, John Lofton, Larry Flynt, M. Stanton Evans, Dana Andrews, Richard Whalen, Richard Lugar, Henry Regnery, Charles Peters, John Lukacs, Leonard Garment, Michael Kinsley, Tom Winter, Nathan Glazer, Alan Reynolds, Antonio Martino, Colin Welch, Robert Bleiberg, Herb Stein, Roger Starr, Walter Goodman, Harry Jaffa, Jeffrey Hart, David Packard, Robert Nisbet, James R. Schlesinger, Thomas Murphy, Suzanne Garment, Roger Rosenblatt, Anthony Harrigan, Robert L. Bartley, Dave Stockman, and many others.

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dustrial powers. Now it seems that challenge is over, replaced by a more ominous double threat facing the entire West: on the one hand the political threat posed by the "Third World" (he includes OPEC countries), and on the other the economic threat posed by Japanese advances in applying micro-chip computer technology to production.

To his credit, M. Servan-Schreiber uses the word "challenge" rather than the tired "crisis" to describe the political-economic situation of the West, for he sees within our troubles the opportunity for great progress both in the "First" and "Third" worlds. But taking separate and rather complex "challenges"—OPEC, poverty in underdeveloped nations, UN politics, falling productivity in the West, extraordinary growth in Japan—and wrapping them into one Big Challenge requiring one Big Solution leads him to distort recent international developments. As the gifted founder and former editor of *L'Express,* M. Servan-Schreiber has also developed a breezy and dramatic writing style which makes the book very pleasurable reading, but only clouds his argument further.

The book opens, in thriller fashion, at a supposedly secret meeting of OPEC leaders last summer in Taif, Saudi Arabia. M. Servan-Schreiber, whom François Bondy has described as a self-appointed "inside dopester," claims that OPEC leaders met and drew up a long-term plan to use the wealth and power of their organization to force the West into a "massive" transfer of technology to the Third World, thereby ushering in the New International Economic Order. For some reason, perhaps because of its "confidentiality," the author does not see the Taif Report as just another disposable Third World manifesto, but as a key with which to unlock the mysteries of Mideast politics, the Protocols of the Elders of OPEC, as it were. He quotes at length from the report (how did he get it?), and though there appears to be nothing in it one cannot find in most UN documents, the author still concludes that "the implementation of the Taif Report will launch the greatest challenge to the Western way of life since the Moslems hammered on the gates of Europe a thousand years ago."

In the digressive chapters that follow, the reader is led through rambling, though still intriguing, histories of OPEC, the Mideast wars, the so-called non-aligned movement, and the revolutions in Libya and Zaire. The point of all this is to show that M. Servan-Schreiber, like so many of his continental colleagues (including M. Mitterand), has come to accept the Western-inspired delusion of Third World "leaders" that their nations are impoverished because of colonialism and imperialism, and that the only solution to their quandary is to develop quickly by expropriating technology from the West. (It goes without saying that the Eastern Bloc is spared both guilt and penance.) The author does not try to make the moral case for expropriation; he just repeats it endlessly and uncritically with the warning that we must respond if we wish to avoid some unstated "catastrophe." If Third World "leaders" continue to speak of the North and South as separate and homogeneous groups of nations, of poverty as a malady rather than a natural condition, of a worldwide Marshall Plan as a viable road to development, M. Servan-Schreiber will repeat their views dramatically and unthinkingly.

This lack of critical analysis becomes most evident when the author assumes that the economic and political power of OPEC will enable it to underwrite Third World demands. After the initial supply shocks caused by embargo and severe price in-

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creases, it is now clear that OPEC power has become weaker and more diffuse. On the economic side, rapid decreases in oil consumption by the West have caused a temporary glut and wide price variations, forcing price reductions after the last OPEC meeting in Geneva. It is not unreasonable to assume that this flexibility in demand along with a desire of suppliers to maintain revenues will moderate prices over the next few years (something for which oil-impoverished developing nations should be grateful). On the political side, OPEC "solidarity" with developing nations has become secondary to obtaining other concessions from the West (AWACs), overcoming regional disputes (Iran-Iraq), and maintaining domestic tranquility (Saudi Arabia). Solidarity in manifestoes is all well and good, but when OPEC countries face their own severe economic and political challenges, it will be every oppressed, struggling, Third World nation for itself.

From the Mideast, M. Servan-Schreiber turns to the Far East and the technological revolution taking place in Japan. Here the author's journalistic style works to his advantage as he give a very readable and highly personal account of Japan's spectacular postwar growth as seen through the biographies of two of Japan's leading industrialists—Masuru Ibuka, of Sony, and Soichiro Honda. Sociological and economic explanations of Japanese successes both have their place, but in this case biography is far more revealing. We read about men who are ambitious, creative, and enthusiastic about their prospects, and who have understood that the key to long-term development and growth lies not in "things" like oil, but in what Servan-Schreiber rightly calls the vast "mine of intelligence."

And nothing uses the "mine of intelligence" more efficiently or effectively than computers, especially those exploiting recent developments in micro-chip technology. The author's discussion of these developments and how they affect our "information-based" and "post-industrial" society is rather pedestrian and at times quite breathless, but in general he makes all the right points. Micro-chips really are revolutionizing the world of computers, making them far more adaptable and far less expensive (in the long run) than the systems used today, and making workers far more productive in their jobs. Though he is exaggerating when he says that "the chip will eventually replace the barrel of oil as the basis for a new kind of 'information society,'" Servan-Schreiber shrewdly sees that the automated workplace has made the Japanese worker both highly productive *and* generally satisfied. "Reindustrialization" or "worker control" are not what the West needs; it must *deindustrialize* the workplace through micro-chips made out of ordinary sand.

It being the nature of these books to put forward a Big Solution to the Big Challenge, it is no surprise that M. Servan-Schreiber sees micro-chips as the salvation of Third World nations and their economies. His model of Third World utopia is not a "Radiant City," but a radiant countryside built upon a "computerized infrastructure," with every village and every town connected by terminal into vast networks of information and education. The advantage of micro-chip processors, as the author explained to a rapt Indira Gandhi, is that "computerized infrastructures for the Third World could make it possible for whole stages of development to be bypassed." The developing countries are behind the times in demanding the transfer of heavy industrial technologies from Western

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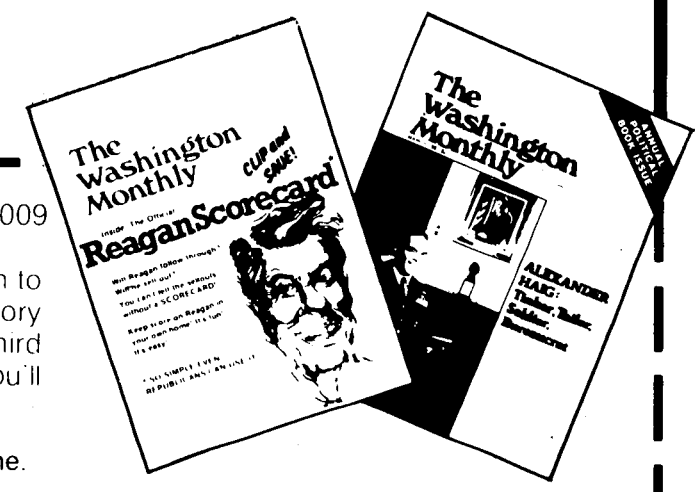

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nations; we must help them enter the Computer Age.

After telling the tale of Japan's extraordinary economic success, it is quite remarkable that M. Servan-Schreiber fails to take from that tale the one obvious lesson—Japan developed from within, *not* because of "transfers." Japan's success has a cultural base which simply cannot be duplicated elsewhere in the world merely by handing over advanced technology, and this is not only owing to a lack of formal training. Until a society's "animal spirits" are released and it occurs to a people to behave like entrepreneurs, the machines will rust and the manuals will grow dusty.

The notion of an Apple computer in every pot, or an airlift of IBMs into African villages that never invented the wheel, seems so absurd as to invite ridicule, were it not that M. Servan-Schreiber's proposals perfectly capture all the contradictions in Western thinking about developing nations and the idea of progress. In discussing the Japanese, it is evident that M. Servan-Schreiber believes in progress, and you have to like a man, any man, who celebrates economic growth and technological improvement as the only hope for the poor and future generations. But the zeal with which Western men have rolled up their sleeves and pursued economic progress has always caused trouble when it has spilled out into areas where progress is an alien idea. To speak of "limits" in domestic social affairs has become so common now as to sound banal, and the barriers to economic and social progress in underdeveloped nations are all too painfully obvious if we are to believe the writings of economist Peter Bauer and novelist V.S. Naipaul.

The paradox of the West's attraction to the idea of progress is that it seldom can be differentiated. Either we have it or we don't. Either we believe there can be progress in human affairs, progress in economics *and* technology *and* society *and* culture, or we pull back and start to question whether the word "progress" has any meaning at all. We cease to believe in our own material well-being and deny that it is possible elsewhere in the world. Individually we know the truth lies somewhere in between, that some things will improve and others remain pretty much the same, and that progress always has its own, often well-hidden price. But as a society and civilization we seem only to be able to turn our engines of progress either on or off.

With his continental utopianism, M. Servan-Schreiber overestimates OPEC, misunderstands the cultural bases of Third World torpor, and naively accepts the tiresome rhetoric of "technology transfer" and the "North-South dialogue." For these reasons, *The World Challenge,* though it will be widely read, should not be taken too seriously. But we should not underestimate the extent to which we all, as Westerners, face the paradox he does in reflecting upon progress in the developing world. No matter how much we agree with the sensible anti-utopianism of Bauer and Naipaul, there is, or should be, something in us that rebels against this constant naysaying. M. Servan-Schreiber fails in constructing his Third World "radiant countryside," but he has maintained a faith in progress which many in the West have lost. It would be best to resurrect faith in progress without reviving utopianism, but that, too, is a rather utopian hope. □

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THE GAMES WAR: A MOSCOW JOURNAL

Christopher Booker / Faber / $18.50, $8.95

Aram Bakshian, Jr.

"Goodness, how sad is our Russia!" Pushkin is said to have exclaimed after hearing Gogol's *Dead Souls* read for the first time. The same thought occured to me on my first day in Russia in the spring of 1974. Breaking away from the official presidential entourage at the Rossiya Hotel, a splendid specimen of the Elephantiasis school of Soviet architecture, I decided to spend a few hours rambling through Moscow's thoroughfares and side streets. As a lowly speechwriter amidst the White House big brass, I had been assigned a distinctly inferior shadow, a fat, warty little man in a baggy gray suit who looked like a cross between Peter Lorre and Helen Traubel. Shaking him was the work of a few briskly walked blocks; the last I saw of my Soviet shadow that afternoon, he was slumped against a wall of the GUM department store, purple in the face, mopping his brow and gazing dumbly through a grimy display window at a disconnected black-and-white television set reminiscent of Motorola's 1952 economy line—a dead soul staring into a dead picture tube.

It was a muggy day and the collective impression of Moscow's streets and crowds was one of sweat and cabbage. Only a few derelict churches with the gilt peeling from their once gleaming onion domes lent distant enchantment to the prospect—the closer one approached the less enchanting it became. Even the spring sunshine failed to cut through the gloom, and a bright moment in a commission shop where I bought a battered but beautiful old brass and onyx desk set only added to the melancholy mood when I pondered the probable history of its original owner, some long-purged functionary or bourgeois merchant whose bric-a-brac had been reluctantly pawned by hard-up relicts.

I returned to the Rossiya prepared to write off the Russian people along

Aram Bakshian, Jr., is a Special Assistant to President Reagan for the Arts and Humanities.

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with the Soviet state. Over the next few days, however, my attitude changed. As I met with individual Russians beyond the coterie of Party hacks one had to deal with officially, I detected more and more traces of the Slavic "soul" I had always loved in White emigré friends in the States. It was like panning for gold in a murky stream; under the surface muck the lode was not yet played out. The immemorial warmth of the Russian spirit had not been killed by the new order; it had been driven inward and, if anything, intensified among the strongest and most decent individual Russians. You saw it in little ways; in the warm smile on a gnarled peasant face responding to a few garbled but courteous words of Russian; in the wink of the plump blond gallery attendant who, the moment our Party guide turned his back, hustled us out of a hall full of hideous Socialist Realist canvasses and into a smaller room of *fin de siècle* masterpieces ("I am thinking you are coming here to see *art,*" was all she said—it was enough); the taxi driver who, in return for a freely offered pack of Winstons, insisted on trying to translate a few historic, pre-Revolutionary plaques with great feeling and scant coherence. These were not dead souls, but buried souls surviving in an internal exile far from Siberia.

Christopher Booker, one of England's most talented author-journalists, returned from a more recent trip to the Soviet Union with much the same impression of individual hearts still beating in a collective coffin. Assigned to cover the Moscow Olympics for the conservative *Daily Mail,* Booker went a great deal further, collecting the raw material for a moving, wide-ranging view of people and state that merely uses the Olympics as a point of departure. Although sketchy in parts, and in danger of becoming a loosely strung series of random impressions, *The Games War* does have a saving grace: a warmly entertaining style coupled with a genuine understanding of its subject. Not surprisingly, Booker's insight is in part hereditary (Russian blood on one side of his family), and it comes across in such passages as his description of the pre-Revolutionary Russia which lives not only in shuttered souls but in one of the greatest bodies of literature produced by any nation in any era, "a land of magnificent individuals where everyone, regardless of class, seemed somehow able to express the glory and the suffering of human existence, in both the outer and inner worlds, more fully and intensely than any other people on earth."

There are many memorable moments in *The Games War,* ranging from a visit to Pasternak's grave that launches a magnificent essay on *Dr. Zhivago,* to a wry handling of the regime's paranoid running of the Games themselves. Repeatedly, Booker points up the Soviets' obsessive "horror of anything spontaneous" which results in the conversion of Moscow into a garrison city during the Games and even in the brutal routing of an impromptu crowd of mourners at the funeral of Vladimir Vysotsky, Russia's most beloved actor and singer.

Again and again the crowning dilemma of totalitarianism comes through; the more a regime bars direct political expression from its people, the more it comes to fear *any* genuine outpouring of popular feeling. When politics are banned everything becomes politicized, *ergo* everything must be controlled or suppressed by the state.

Not all is grimness, however. Just as individual Russians preserve their internal humanity, Booker witnesses the stubborn survival of national character among Soviet subject peoples during a visit to tiny Estonia. (Estonian joke: What is the largest country in the world? Estonia, because its coastline is on the Baltic, its capital is Moscow, and its population is in Siberia.) He also describes a number of amusing Soviet blunders in the running of the games. Despite official bias and instances of outright cheating, Russian contestants are trounced by several Cubans, Poles, and East Germans, and one of the few genuine "Third World" victories is won by a Zimbabwe women's hockey team consisting entirely of white Salisbury housewives.

Booker leaves Russia relieved and glad to re-enter the free world. But the elation is short-lived when, back in London, he is impressed by the comparative moral flaccidness of so many Westerners. He is struck by a thought of the dissident Vladimir Bukovsky: "The lack of bitter experience of the people in the West makes them incapable of imagining tragedy." In a real world so full of tragic possibilities, Booker wonders where this lack of moral imagination may lead us. Which is perhaps the greatest historic irony of our time: The half of the world living under the heel of materialistic totalitarianism has failed to produce a new Soviet Man but may, in spite of itself, have produced through persecution a different breed of superman—a minority of invincible spirits unequalled in the torpid West. □

UNRELIABLE MEMOIRS

Clive James / Alfred A. Knopf / $10.00

Ronald B. Shwartz

Clive James is the eminent British critic of whom it was once said: "He keeps words spinning like saucers on poles." There is, in fact, a certain nervous bustle to the man's style. But the image, as it turns out, has to do not just with style and not just (as style always does) with the man: In *Unreliable Memoirs,* the story of his coming of age in Sydney, Australia, the image points more emphatically to the boy that James allegedly was —a smart-alecky imp, a kind of vaudevillian of derring-do—who, like a spinner of saucers, moved nowhere fast and sustained a lot of accidents.

"I know," says James, "that until very recent years I was never quite all there—that I was play-acting instead of living and that nothing except my own unrelenting fever of self-consciousness seemed quite real. Eventually, in my middle thirties, I got a grip on myself. But there can be no doubt that I had a tiresomely protracted adolescence, wasting a lot of people's time, patience and love."

Beware such solemn candor, however. *Unreliable Memoirs* is a far cry from true confession or guilt-orgy, and there is cause to wonder if James isn't still "play-acting" even now. His, after all, is a frankly "unreliable" account: "Most first novels are disguised autobiographies. This autobiography is a disguised novel." In fact it is neither one nor the other (though his compatriots, who made it a best-seller, apparently thought the disclaimer was itself a ruse of some kind). It's as if candor, for a licensed bull-artist like James, were the virtue of last resort. So that what we get is a coy muddling of fact and factoid, and a breezily comic one at that.

With the facts as shaky as saucers on poles, only a select few seem stable: He was born in 1939 in New South Wales and christened "Vivian"—a name he later changed to the less effeminate Clive (lifted from a Tyrone Power movie). He was a member of what he calls "the lucky generation," by which he means the generation that missed the century's major wars. But not quite: At the end of WW II, his father, a POW in Japan, is released from prison only to perish when his home-bound plane crashes in a typhoon. The son, an only child, is untamed by his widowed mother and gets too much of what he wanted and not enough of what he needed. And what he wanted, to put it discreetly, was not what Tom Sawyer or the Hardy Boys wanted.

(*continued on page 41*)

Ronald B. Shwartz is a Boston attorney and freelance writer.

ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY CENTER
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CURRENT WISDOM

Ms.

Axiological flummeries from Alan Alda, coverboy:

Some of the nicest moments of my life have happened over meals. Going out to dinner with the people I'm working with on a film is more important to me than rehearsals. Sharing great food is a sensuous experience in a controlled environment. Come to think of it, eating is one of the few sensuous things people can do together . . . . I tend to be relentless, but I talk about serious problems in warm tones because I believe the biggest basis for rapprochement is respect for differences. In fact, one of the reasons that feminism has so much to offer everyone is because of its celebration of differences and admiration of diversity. . . . I find politics and sports amusing for about five minutes. It always boils down to one person thinking the Dodgers will win and the other thinking they won't. It's irrational, *unfelt*, and backed up by irrelevant data memorized for the sheer act of knowing. . . . I don't want to sound freakishly perfect, but . . . . When I served on the International Women's Year Commission, I was the only man in the room at one meeting in Washington. I was angry and yelling passionately about some setback for women's rights, and I heard myself saying, "They can't do this to *us*."

[*June 1981*]

The New York Times

The comparative condition of human rights in Argentina as reported by Tom Wicker, whose knowledge of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has apparently been limited to Vodka and the Bolshoi:

Nowhere, in any society or any political system, whether of left or right, are those principles more systematically violated today than they are in Argentina.

[*June 16, 1981*]

The Daily Olympian

An intellectual reader of Olympia, Washington's *Daily Olympian* files thought that could make every chef in the country into an accessory before the fact:

I have read with interest your coverage of John Hinckley's shooting of President Reagan. I keep looking for reasons of why someone who was seemingly well adjusted as a young teenager would change so drastically as a young man. His wealthy parents and popular siblings, his infatuation for "Taxi Driver's" Jodie Foster were all written about, but can the old standards of background and culture fully explain this bizarre behavior?

What about his diet? The newspaper's description of a repairman's report of Hinckley slumped over in front of his TV surrounded by an apartment filled with junk food wrappers suggests to me that we need to look much more closely at how his diet has affected his behavior.

[*April 27, 1981*]

Esquire

Hard times and sempiternal angst in Kalamazoo, Michigan, exhibited in the correspondence section of *Esquire*, a man's magazine:

I am sitting at my bedroom desk, sipping on a quart of Miller and smoking a joint. I just finished reading Harry Stein's column "Looking Hard at Number One" (Ethics, February). He quotes a former therapist friend who said to him: "Real change involves enormous pain." I agree. How do I know? The woman I love more than anybody I've ever loved told me two nights ago that she needed two weeks off from me after some hassling over the jealousy issue. (I was jealous and ridiculous about it.) I've requested the same "space time" a couple of times myself. That was easy. This is the first time she's put the shoe on the other foot. My insides quiver. I take another toke and another sip. Now I know what the feminists mean by "double standard." The insight kicked me in the ass.

[*April 1981*]

Maryknoll

On the pious pages of *Maryknoll* the eminent Eugene H. Ciarlo demonstrates how Dr. Marx has been ignominiously unhorsed in Fidel's island prayer chamber:

I enjoyed the recent *Maryknoll* on "Religion in Cuba." It is so rare that we Americans can be objective about that particular country, or any communist country for that matter. We seem to deny that even atheists can be anonymous Christians in their lifestyle. What came to me mostly was that the Christianity that used to be preached can now be lived. That is surely building up the kingdom of God—our whole effort.

[*November 1980*]

The Eagle

(American University)

A shocking report on enemy action within the United States, thus far suppressed by most of our major news media:

A chain of political assassinations in the U.S., and the recent killing of nearly two dozen black children in Atlanta can both be linked to an intricate conspiracy involving the FBI, the Central Intelligence Agency and organized crime in America, according to political activist and comedian Dick Gregory.

In a Kennedy Political Union speech held Tuesday night in Ward I, Gregory said the shootings of President John Kennedy, his brother Robert and even the recent assassination attempt on President Reagan can all be connected with covert CIA and FBI activity aimed at increasing the power of the law enforcement agencies and organized crime.

Gregory, who was humorous while discussing serious matters, said Vice President George Bush "is a CIA man to the end." One coincidence in the assassination attempt, Gregory said, was that Bush's son had dinner with John Hinckley's brother the day of the assassination attempt. . . . "This thing called American would make Hitler look like God," Gregory said.

In addition to the assassination attempts, Gregory also accused the FBI and the National Center for Disease Control with the recent death of 23 youths in Atlanta.

Gregory said the plan was part of a complex scheme designed by the CIA to increase the production of the possible cancer miracle drug interferon. By killing the youths and snipping off the tips of youngsters' penises, he said, the agency is extracting the blood needed to create the artificial form of the cancer cure which sells for $22 billion dollars a pint.

[*April 17, 1981*]

The New Republic

Prof. Marina Warner takes the spellbound readers of the *New Republic* through a review of the randy lucubrations of Dr. William Irwin Thompson, just minutes before the vice squad arrived at his library:

Rather coyly, Thompson hints at his own taste for the feminine principle, when he mentions some corroborating "experiences in Kriya yoga." But he describes how during Tantric meditation, "the *sushumna* of the spine becomes a vagina and the yogi feels an ecstatic experience that is both male and female at once." Thompson also extols Upper Paleolithic culture for its similar understanding. He reinterprets the famous enigma in the Shaft of the Dead Man at Lascaux, and finds that the fallen man with an erect penis is a shaman envisioning through psychic forces in the genitals the Great Goddess in her aspect of a huge life-giving bison. Thompson also suggests that Christ incorporates the feminine principle through the vulva-shaped wound in his side.

Such a fusion of spiritual and genital consciousness in esoteric thought gives biology an inordinately important symbolic place, and though Hera's reaction to Tiresias's presumption was perhaps excessive, surely one of the inviolable mysteries is the experience of the other sex. The Tantric yogi considers, with Thompson, that he has experienced the state of being female. This must be hubris.

[*May 23, 1981*]

San Francisco Chronicle

The war against crime as practiced by advanced criminologists in the psychic capital of America:

More than 40 devotees of Transcendental Meditation met behind closed doors daily through April and May, and now declare that this collective act of contemplation had the effect of cutting crime in San Francisco.

"There is now a technique among people who practice TM that relieves the collective stress and violence in society and improves the quality of life," said TM executive Robert Roth with little more ceremony than someone introducing a new line of machine tools.

[*June 15, 1981*]

Soviet Life

Three brave Americans defy the CIA and the American Legion to express their true sentiments about the benevolent USSR in the free and vivacious correspondence section of *Soviet Life:*

We could not resist the opportunity to comment on the cover of your February issue of *Soviet Life*. Gennadi Bashtanyuk has a far-reaching appeal any Western woman could appreciate. We would like to see more of this Soviet worker. Thank you.

Anne M. Cramer
St. Paul, Minnesota

I am an Armenian 83 years old and I remember a long long time ago when we were under the yoke of Turkish rulers and all the Armenians were treated very badly.

I remember also when my father used to say or whisper that our only hope was that our big uncle would do something to free us.

It was a dream, and that dream came late, but it finally came and now we are a free nation, and in that 60 years we did very well.

I went to Armenia and I hardly could believe my eyes the things they did in that short time. It is wonderful for a small nation like Armenia to be partners with a big country like Russia and have the same freedom and same right in everything and everywhere.

Their doors are never locked day or night. There is no fear of any kind or from anyone.

We Armenians outside of Armenia hope and pray only for one thing, peace and no war any more.

We Armenians know very well the value of peace and freedom.

Kegham Agegian
Royal Oak, Michigan

The beautiful six-page spread of the Hermitage in the February 1981 issue of *Soviet Life* brought back memories of my visit to the Hermitage in September of 1976. During my visit I was only able to see and photograph but a fraction of its beautiful art. However, I was able to purchase sets of 24 slides each of paintings of English, Flemish and Netherlands artists, sculpture and treasures from the gold room at the museum gift shop. On my return to Portland I was invited to use them in a slide show for members of the Oregon Artists Society. It was acclaimed the Society's finest show of the year.

Arthur Hansen
Portland, Oregon

[*May 1981*]

The Wall Street Journal

A report on life in the ghetto from Prof. Schlesinger, a beleaguered homeowner on East 64th Street:

The rich have estates; the poor go to public playgrounds, swimming pools and parks. The rich have doctors on Park Avenue; the rest of us look at mounting medical bills and yearn for national health insurance.

[*June 2, 1981*]

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SHWARTZ

(continued from page 39)

As James tells it, he was a hell-bent little swine who spent his time, among countless other ways, cavorting with the neighborhood girl Allowed to Run Wild, or "exploiting a highly marketable capacity to fart at will" for classroom entertainment ("timing, not ripeness, is all"), or competing in masturbation games with his precocious friend Gary, who is "able to conjure a whole vichyssoise into being." Boys will be boys, all right, but Vivian was a boy to the fourth power. He once dressed up in green mask and cape and became "the Flash of Lightning," inciting his fellow imps to wreak havoc on local building sites. Or turning to more cultural sport, he and the gang attended a matinée performance of "Giselle" and, arming themselves with hard candies, stopped the show by taking aim at the dancer Albrecht's codpiece.

Of course, in every self-deprecating memoir there lurks a thinly disguised narcissist, and all his cries of "What a bad boy I was" may be translated "I've come a long way, baby!" What redeems some otherwise tasteless prepubescent pap in this book—what makes the sexual, scatological, and (thanks to Vivian's chronic sinus condition) mucal obsessions palatable and even funny to a civil reader—is the exaggerated, almost endemically British precision of the prose, its sheer verve and resourcefulness. And it's exactly this that serves as the measure of how far the baby has come. Here it is on no less trifling a subject than eating, as opposed to launching, hard candies:

> The star lolly, outstripping even the Violet Crumble Bar and Fantail in popularity, was undoubtedly the Jaffa. A packet of Jaffas was loaded like a cluster bomb with about fifty globular lollies the size of ordinary marbles. The Jaffa had a dark chocolate core and a brittle orange candy coat: in cross section it looked rather like the planet earth. It presented two alternative ways of being eaten, each with its allure. You could fondle the Jaffa on the tongue until your saliva ate its way through the casing, whereupon the taste of chocolate would invade your mouth with a sublime, majestic inevitability. Or you could bite straight through and submit the interior of your head to a stunning explosion of flavor.

What Vivian did to Jaffas, James does to his memories of Vivian: He fondles them with his tongue, toys with them, sucks them dry for laughs—but seldom strays from their most palpable qualities. He is more anecdotal than reflective, and hardly ever sociological or psychological like Orwell in the classic reminiscence "Such, Such Were the Joys." For all his early dare-deviltry, James is something of an emotional coward—his forte is fun, not feelings, but it misses the point to say that his narrative objective was limited to fun. The point, rather, is that James sought nothing less than catharsis ("Sick of being prisoner of my childhood, I want to put it behind me") and failed at it; by his own last-page admission, he is "not even yet sufficiently at peace with myself," and it's no wonder: He never veers far from the very real angst of his youth—guilt at having tormented his mother tolls through the book like a faint, leaden bell—but he never gets too close to it, never confronts the soft underbelly of trauma without taking refuge in the clown-suit. There is a notable, if fleeting, exception; it is lovely, resonant, and profound, and it ends the book and one can only hope it begins a more "reliable" sequel: At 22, he is standing on board a Greek ship, about to leave home to seek his fortune in London:

> Could my loved ones tell from my eyes how much less I felt than they did? Catching my streamer as she stood with thousands of others at the rail of the dock, my mother was as brave as if she had never done this before. Which ship was it that she was seeing? Was it her husband or her son who stood at the other end of the swooping ribbon that grew straight, then taut, then snapped? □

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EDITORIAL

(continued from page 5)

about moving spring training to the south of France?

The owners, of course, have acted without any regard whatsoever for the thousands of individuals whose very livelihoods depend upon summer baseball. And what of public safety? With so many baseball fans released from salutary confinement in the ballparks crime rates will soar. Throughout this strike the *carabinieri* in all our major league cities are going to be kept jumping. So are the criminal psychiatrists. Many arrests will be made and a goodly number of fans could be socked away in the calaboose for years. By the strike's end there may not remain enough fans at large to fill the bleachers and empty bleachers will mean financial disaster for professional baseball. Who doubts that the majority of baseball fans attend games as much for the spectacle provided by the animals in the bleachers as for the spectacle on the field? I know I do.

As for the players, I tire of all the intellectualizing spun about them. It is an insult to sport. It is an attempt by the intellectually precious to impose their abstruse system of values upon an activity that eludes it. Sport should be enjoyed for what it is. The tendency of intellectuals to transmogrify reality into something it clearly is not has grown to become the bane of American life. It is at the heart of most of our social and political confusions. As it manifests itself in sport it is often an attempt by intellectuals to get into the ballpark and hog the show.

The activity of the athlete is basically the activity of an animal; an animal highly trained, occasionally an animal of noble mien, but an animal. The athlete applies muscle and instinct to a physical task. There is *au fond* very little of the higher intellection involved. Rather there is a large element of spirit, and it is that which makes the athlete occasionally so noble. Any coach worth his salt knows that an athlete's performance depends on his ability to execute consistently a certain range of moves regardless of conditions: swing and follow through, does the crowd jeer? swing and follow through, does the catcher sneeze inopportunely? swing and follow through.

Admittedly the major league players are highly paid animals. Their average salary is almost $180,000. Furthermore, they are in a better position to spend their earnings than, say, the winning horse at the Kentucky Derby. Yet by the time their paychecks have passed through the hands of their agents, lawyers, accountants, hairdressers, wives, and all the other handlers affixed to them, I doubt that they come away with much more than would a virtuous United States Senator or a San Francisco garbageman.

As the strike moves on let us keep things in perspective. And if we really must take sides consider championing the cause of the ballpark vendor. He is the only consistently civilized performer at these debauches anyway. There is artistry in his performance. His pitch is melodic and often unique. His poise is amazing. And as he capers about, balancing his colossal tray, he serves the commonweal, selling frankfurters to nourish the system and cold beer to stupefy the animals. I cannot recall a game during which some unknown vendor did not astonish and improve me with a unique yell, a reassuring insult, a gift for changing a dozen five-dollar bills with one hand and in lightning speed. Hats off to the ballpark vendor. While the owners and the players count their gold he is out of work. □

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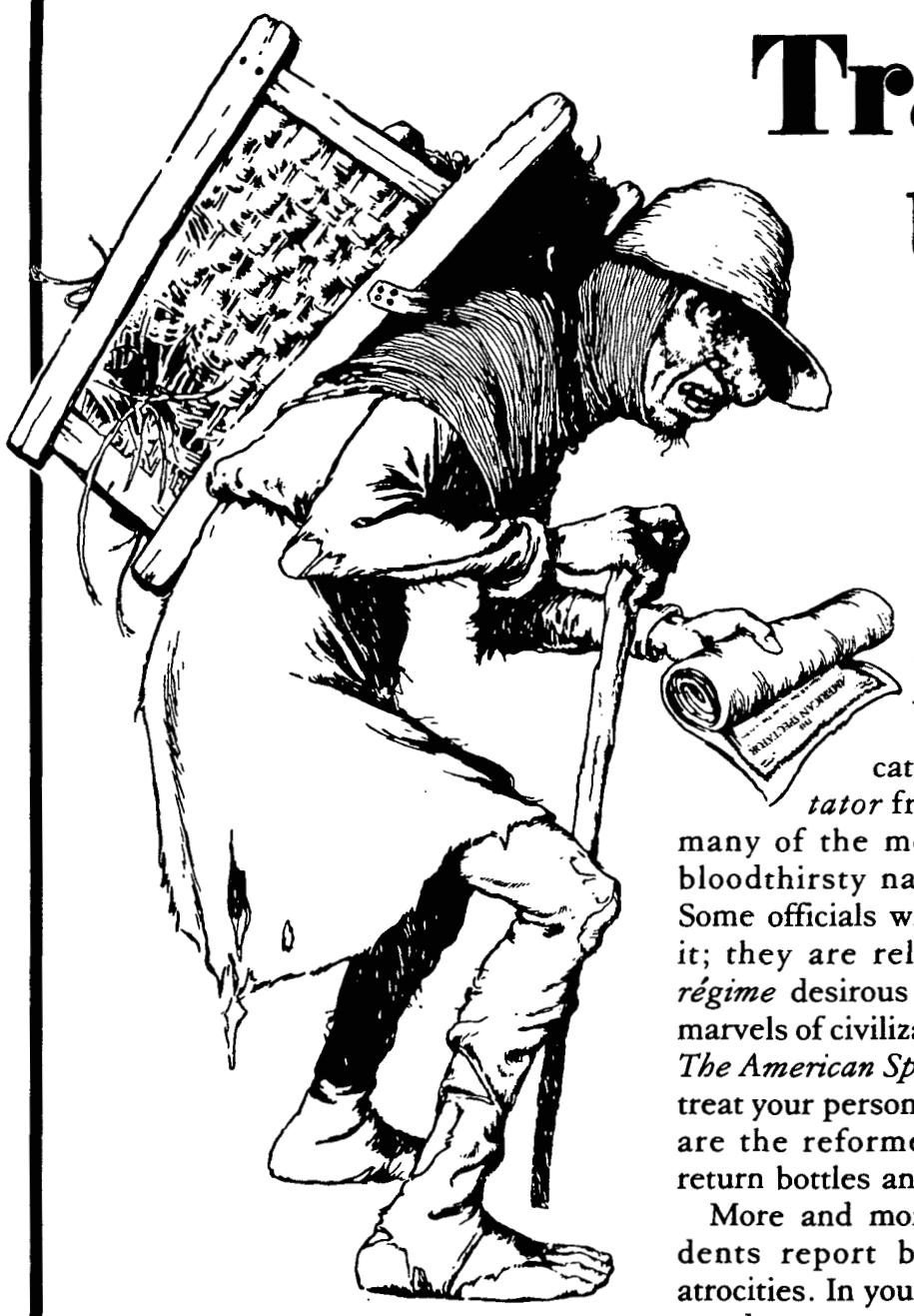

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